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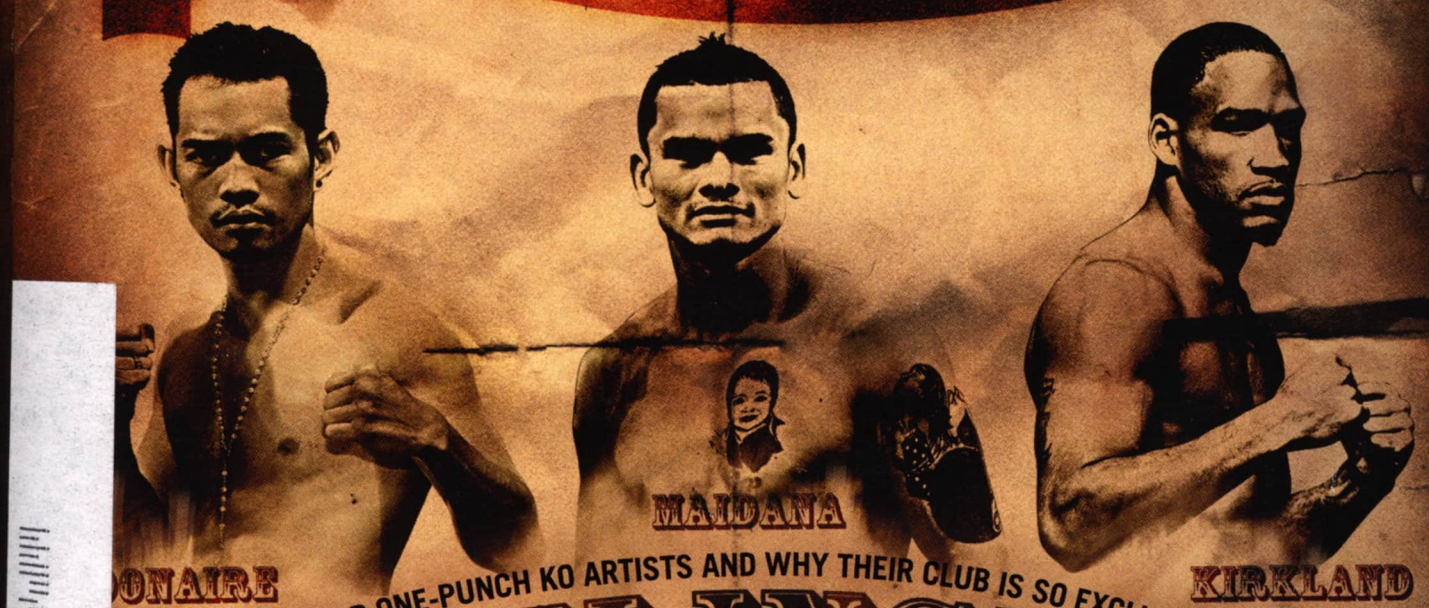

THE TOP ONE-PUNCH KO ARTISTS AND WHY THEIR CLUB IS SO EXCLUSIVE

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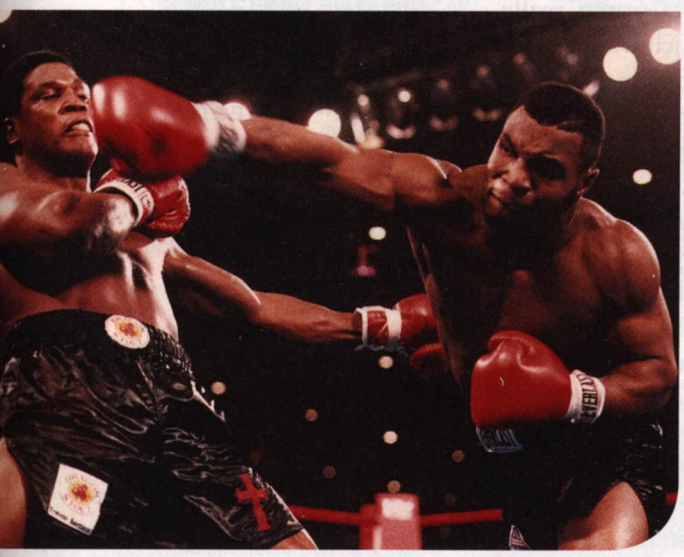

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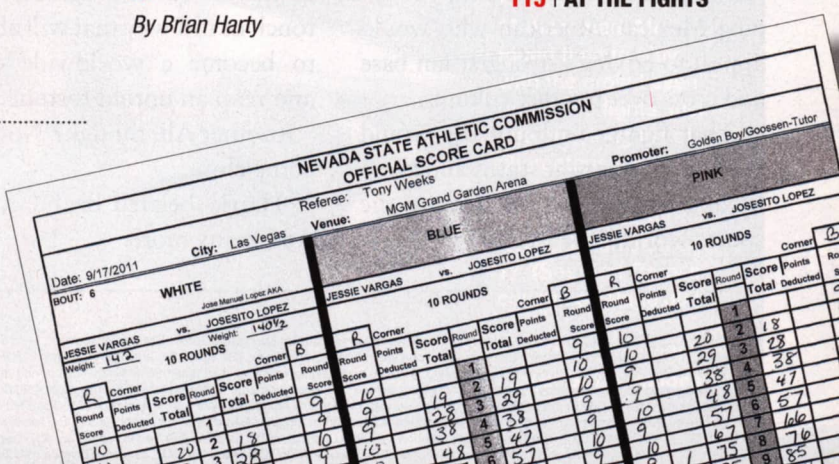

THE ONE AND ONLY

By **Michael Rosenthal**

We'll never see another Muhammad Ali, whose unique combination of charisma, athletic ability and timing couldn't possibly be duplicated. That's why he remains a worldwide icon.

How close can we get?

Well, we've had fighters since Ali who captured the public's imagination. Sugar Ray Leonard had a formidable combination of charm and ability. He also was fortunate to have compelling foils, as Ali did.

Mike Tyson was riveting much of his career because of his ability to render big men unconscious. But his flame began to dim at 23, the age at which he was knocked out by Buster Douglas.

Oscar De La Hoya had similar qualities to Leonard but wasn't as good and arrived at a time when boxing was slipping from mainstream consciousness.

We love Manny Pacquiao, who has an uncanny ability to touch people and deliver excitement in the ring. And we admire Floyd Mayweather Jr., a master of both the sweet science and pushing people's buttons.

Yes, all of Ali's successors will live on in boxing lore long after they're gone. None have approached Ali, though.

The perfect fighter today might be a heavyweight version of De La Hoya with power like Tyson, a strapping Mexican-American who would appeal to boxing's strongest fan base and cross over to other cultures.

That fighter undoubtedly would reach true superstar status and bring boxing back to the forefront of the sports world, at least for a time.

Still, he wouldn't be Ali. The Greatest was boxing's perfect storm.

Legend says that Ali borrowed the shtick of wrestler Gorgeous George, who built a successful career largely on his big mouth. Ali took it the highest level, creating a persona that would captivate the world.

He also became an important political figure by circumstance, which no other athlete save Jackie Robinson can claim. He made a public stand against the Vietnam War, which cost him three-plus prime years of his career.

For that, he transcended sports and over time became a hero in the eyes of many.

And, finally, The Greatest really was the greatest, which was perhaps the most important element of the storm. None of it would've worked if he didn't win fights.

I believe Ali was the greatest heavyweight who ever lived, particularly in the years before his hiatus from boxing for refusing induction into the armed services.

He was an unorthodox boxer but an incredible one nonetheless, with athleticism and speed – as well as unusual ring savvy – that few of his early foes could even begin to cope with. Float like a butterfly indeed.

Ali the boxer was awesome in the most literal sense of the word.

Another fighter will come along who reminds us of Leonard or Tyson or De La Hoya or Pacquiao or Mayweather, a fighter who will touch us in a way that will allow him to become a worldwide celebrity and reap an untold fortune.

Another Ali, though? No one will come close.

Happy belated birthday, champ. And many more.

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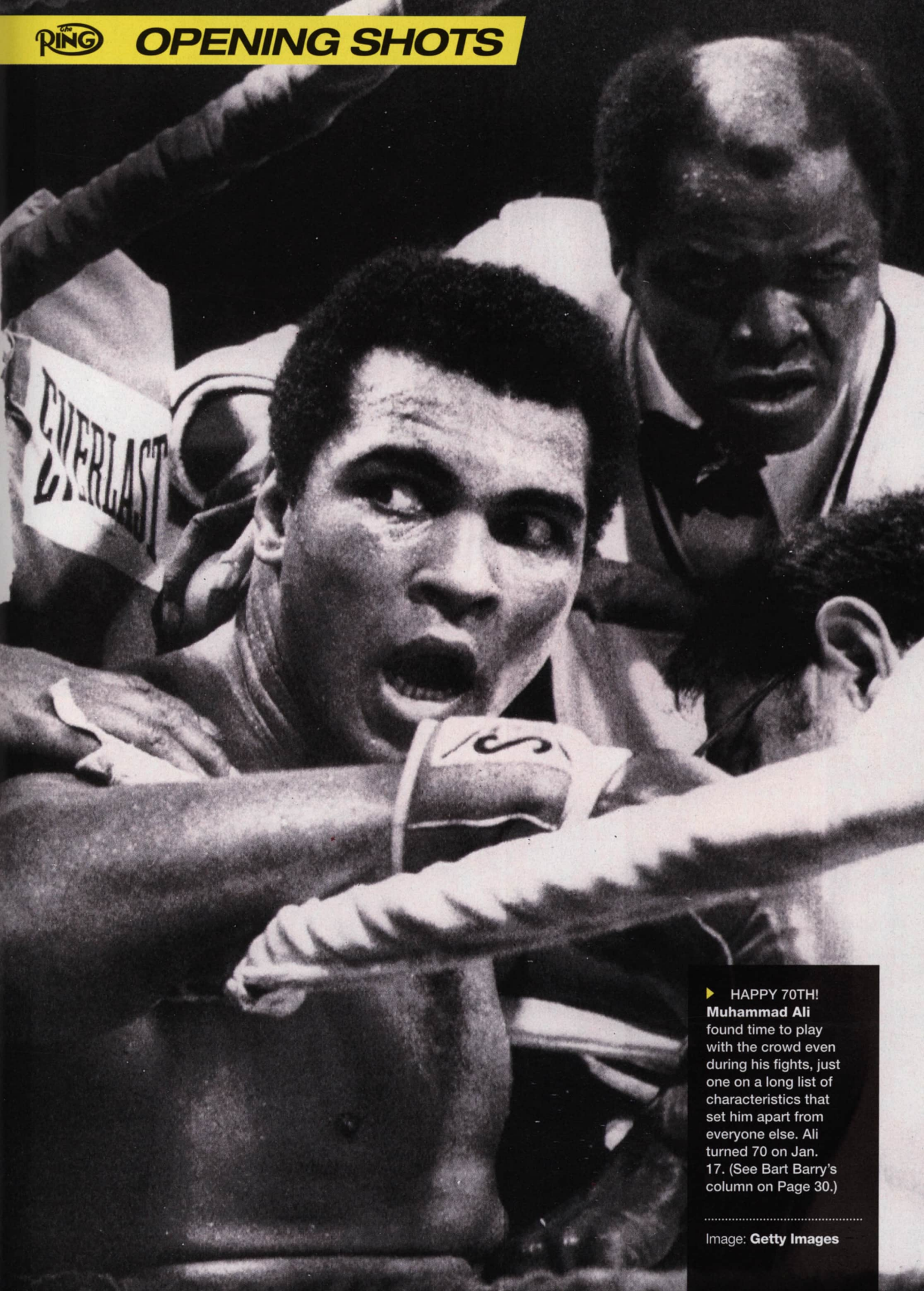

HAPPY 70TH! **Muhammad Ali** found time to play with the crowd even during his fights, just one on a long list of characteristics that set him apart from everyone else. Ali turned 70 on Jan. 17. (See Bart Barry's column on Page 30.)

Image: **Getty Images**

Robert Stieglitz (right) easily outpointed **Henry Weber** on Jan. 14 in Germany, the WBO super middleweight titleholder's 10th consecutive victory.

Image: **Getty Images**

Teon Kennedy (left) and **Christopher Martin** battled to a hard-fought and entertaining draw on Jan. 13 in Las Vegas.

Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

Arthur Abraham (right) rebounded from a disastrous Super Six World Boxing Classic by stopping Pablo Oscar Natalio Farias on Jan. 14 in Germany, although he didn't look particularly good until the knockout.

Image: **Getty Images**

David Price of Great Britain couldn't have been happier after stopping John McDermott in only 73 seconds Jan. 21 in Price's hometown of Liverpool. And why not? Price earned a shot at Tyson Fury and the British heavyweight title.

Image: Getty Images

One reader thinks THE RING didn't give Wilfredo Benitez enough credit in its 90th Anniversary issue. Image: **THE RING**

GIVE BENITEZ HIS DUE

Congratulations on your 90th anniversary issue (February 2012). The longevity is admirable.

It has been a seriously long time since I have purchased an issue of THE RING. I used to read it regularly from the '60's-early '80s, and I am still impressed with the format and legitimacy that always made it the authority in boxing. However, you missed big by leaving out Wilfred Benitez from among the Top 10 of his decade. You merely added a footnote indicating Benitez becoming the youngest to ever win a world title. He did so by beating a legit champion (Antonio Cervantes) and going on to provide the sport of boxing with a gracefulness and ability that is rare. Benitez was from my hometown of the Bronx and not some manufactured media-darling type, he still performed brilliantly and put fans in the seats. His defense was unparalleled as was his counterpunching. He had one of the best jabs in the sport's history. It's too bad he never had elite management. His style was all his own and he defeated some of the best of his era, some of whom you've ranked while leaving Benitez out.

Wilfred Benitez was for sure among the great ones. Yet he is largely forgotten or ignored by the sports media. His full story is one that should be investigated and told. He has given boxing his all and surely deserves better recognition and respect.

Efrain Diaz
Boron, Calif.

KHAN GOT WHAT HE DESERVED

As an Englishman, I have to say I am disgusted by the ridiculous whining of Amir Khan in his losing fight against Lamont Peterson in December.

I watched the fight on television and commentator Jim Watt, a former world lightweight champion, kept saying "he's going to get points deducted, the referee keeps telling him and he keeps taking no notice." And that was long before referee Joe Cooper took action.

In the studio, three former world champions, Johnny Nelson, Barry McGuigan and Steve Collins, all thought Peterson had won the fight and also condemned Khan for his ridiculous moaning.

I myself thought Peterson won fairly comfortably as Khan only fought for about 20 seconds per round. Khan fought a stupid fight and got exactly what he deserved – nothing.

Paul Barker
Derbyshire, England

WHAT ABOUT VONDA?

I'm writing to THE RING Magazine in reference to the article on the Most-significant Female Boxers of All Time (February 2012). I'm the manager of Vonda Ward, who held the WBC and IBA heavyweight titles. She also held the IBA cruiserweight belt. Considering she was the first legitimate female world heavyweight champion recognized by a major sanctioning body (WBC), I don't understand how she was not mentioned in the Top 10 or even in the "Others who should be recognized" section. She only had one loss – to Ann Wolfe while competing two weight classes below her normal competitive class – but went undefeated the rest of her career and won a title. I do not know too many boxers, male or female, who could come back from such a viscous knockout to win a legitimate world title belt.

Edwin King
Ward's manager

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Lost in the post-fight controversy was the fact that **Lamont Peterson** and **Amir Khan** left everything in the ring during a tremendous fight.

Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

WE'RE FORGETTING WHY WE BECAME FANS

By: **David Greisman**

This sport attains its most glorious moments when leather is swapped in the ring. It just doesn't retain them.

Politics and corruption distract from the best boxing has to offer but only because we allow them to. Both are issues that deserve to be covered but neither should completely obscure what should be dominating the conversation.

We have become more interested in fantasy than in the fantastic. We never pass up an opportunity to turn controversy into conspiracy. We stopped thinking of ourselves as boxing fans and instead think along the lines of boxing managers and promoters.

We talk more about ducking and diving and faking than we do about sticking and moving and fighting. Look back at 2011: Was it the year of Delvin Rodriguez and Pawel Wolak and Andre Berto and Victor Ortiz and countless other boxers and battles? Or was it the year of Ortiz's head butt, Bernard Hopkins' shoulder, Antonio Margarito's eye and Juan Manuel Marquez's crotch-covering sombrero?

There must be some allure to debate and disagreement — why else is "Around the Horn" still on the air? But that's only acceptable so long as the debate and disagreement doesn't come at the detriment of the sport, of the sacrifices that the fighters make and the storylines that should be discussed rather than so summarily discarded.

If you saw Amir Khan vs. Lamont Peterson, you saw a good fight. You just haven't heard anything about that good fight since.

Instead of hearing about Peterson's victory and Khan's defeat, the weeks that followed were a steady

stream of why Peterson shouldn't remain the winner and Khan the loser. Both fighters should've come out winners in a bout that was as much about guts and heart as it was about hands and smarts. But when an entertaining, dramatic 12 rounds transitions into conspir-excuses, everyone loses.

This is what we've gotten too much of from Khan and his team: The scorecards took too long to be tabulated and read, so there must've been something amiss. A judge appeared to have changed his score in the seventh round (a fallacy and a misunderstanding of the truth), so there must've been something amiss. The referee took the fight away from us. We were told as soon as the fight ended that Khan won. A sanctioning body's master score sheet disappeared. And a "mystery man" sitting next to an official looked like he was tampering with the scorecards.

This is what we've not gotten enough of: Khan also blaming himself, and not just the officials, for the fight being so close — and striving to get better to make sure that it doesn't happen again.

Even without the conspiracies and controversy, the bout deserved a sequel. It was close but not clear. The majority of the match had been overshadowed by Khan's pushing and the referee's strange timing when issuing two point deductions.

Khan improved markedly following his stunning knockout loss to Breidis Prescott. Peterson performed remarkably against Khan, who was a clear favorite over a fighter who'd lost clearly to Timothy Bradley. Both men can get even better. And both deserve better than the in-fight action being forgotten in favor of the post-fight accusations.

There could've been a few upsides to Floyd Mayweather Jr. serving his jail time in the first few months of 2012 instead of delaying it until mid-year — and not just that he could've had the chance to make the very license plates that will end up on all the new cars he buys this year.

Mayweather could've reflected on what landed him in legal trouble sooner rather than later. Marquez or Bradley could've had a clear mandate for facing Pacquiao in his next outing. And there wouldn't be yet another return to talk of Mayweather-Pacquiao and why it once again won't be happening.

For more than two years, all of the talking has shifted from the many things that must be done to get two of the best fighters in the world in the ring together, to the many obstacles keeping them away from each other. All the talk becomes a vacuum that sucks the air away from fights and fighters that actually deserve attention — aggravating but acceptable when it happens for a pay-per-view on the horizon, not when it involves something still seemingly light years away.

Barring a miracle — the Grinch's heart did grow three sizes, and Ebenezer Scrooge did give in to the spirit of giving — we will once again end up with Pacquiao against someone who is not Mayweather, and Mayweather against someone who is not Pacquiao. Both will be heavily favored to win their respective

We need more fights like **Alfredo Angulo** (left) vs. **James Kirkland**, and fewer mismatches.

Image: **Hogan Photos**

bouts. Both will bring in tens of millions of dollars. And no one but them, their promoters and their partisans — those fans who think along the lines of promoters and managers — will come out the richer.

I'm less captivated with the marketing machine making stars and more enamored by fighters doing it themselves. Berto and Ortiz brought more thrills with their one war than they did with their countless televised ritual sacrifices. Nonito Donaire's left hook on Fernando Montiel and James Kirkland's comeback against Alfredo Angulo made them must-see. Mismatches do not.

The old names are becoming old news. Promoters need to put their prospects and contenders in competitive bouts. They need to give fans compelling reasons to tune in. The fans will give in return — make it worth their time and money, and they will make it worthwhile. ■

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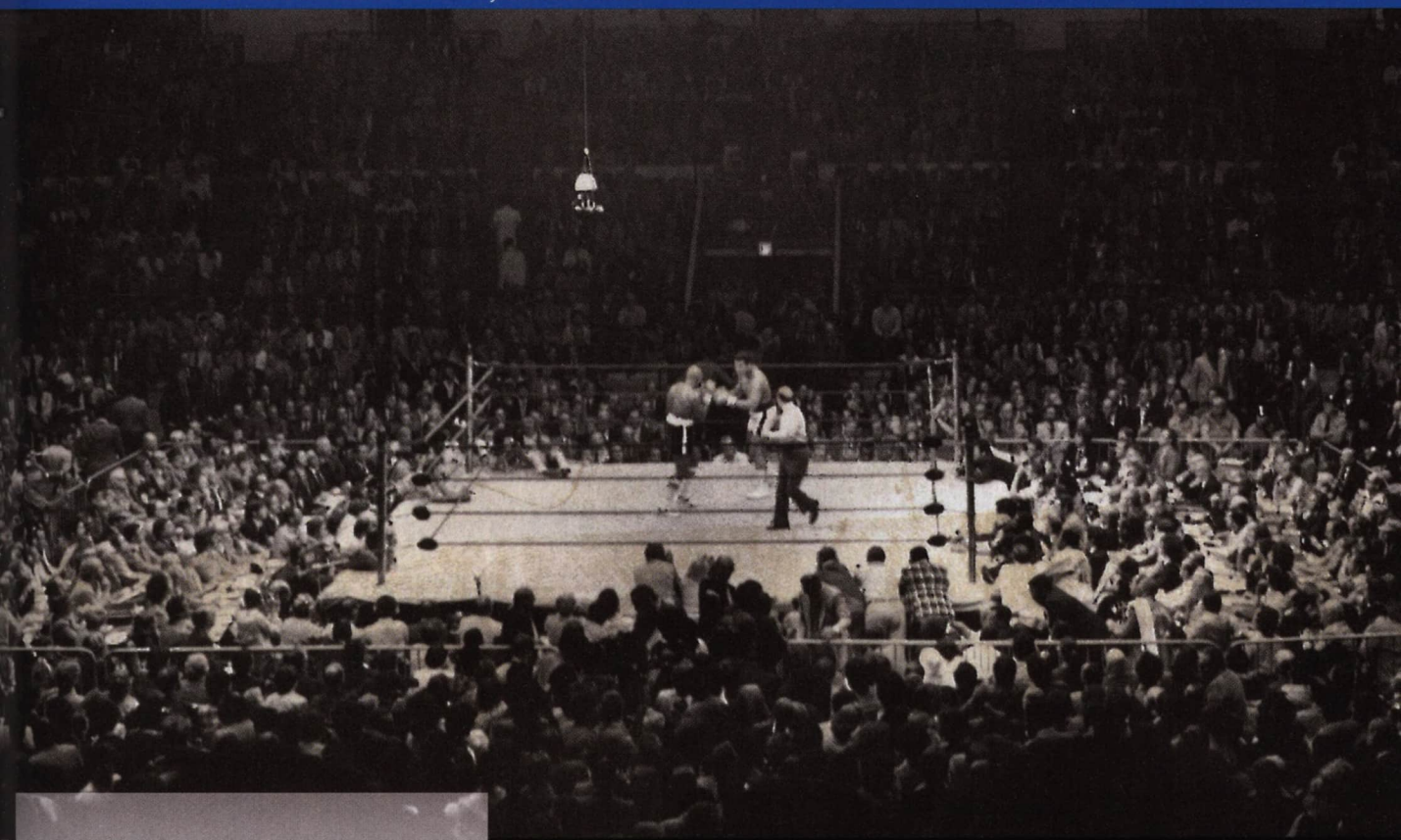
JABS & STRAIGHT WRITES

By **Thomas Hauser**



Matchmaker **Brad Goodman** is somewhere in the crowd during the **Muhammad Ali-Earnie Shavers** fight in 1977. He'll never forget the experience. Image: **THE RING**

WORTH THE TROUBLE

Brad Goodman has become one of the premier matchmakers in boxing. Recently, he reminisced about the first professional fight he ever saw:

"I wasn't a boxing fan when I was a kid. But I had a cousin who was three years older than I was. And whatever he liked, I liked. I was eleven when Muhammad Ali fought Earnie Shavers at Madison Square Garden [on Sept. 29, 1977]. My cousin was excited about the fight; so I asked my father to take me, and he did."

"My parents were divorced, so there was something special about a night out with my father. I'd never been to The Garden before. Walking into the arena, I could feel the excitement. We were there for all the preliminary fights, and I remember thinking how the sights and sounds were different from watching a fight on television."

"Reading the fight program, I decided that I was rooting for Shavers. He had all these knockouts and the program called him the hardest puncher in boxing history. I still remember how he looked, coming down the aisle to the theme music from S.W.A.T.. Then Ali came down the aisle, and he looked invincible. The crowd had roared for Shavers, but that was nothing compared to the roar for Ali."

"When the fight started, my legs were shaking with excitement. I couldn't believe that I was there. It was a great fight. I was disappointed when they announced that Ali had won the decision. Most people think of that fight as Ali-Shavers; but for me, it will always be Shavers-Ali. I was hooked on Earnie."

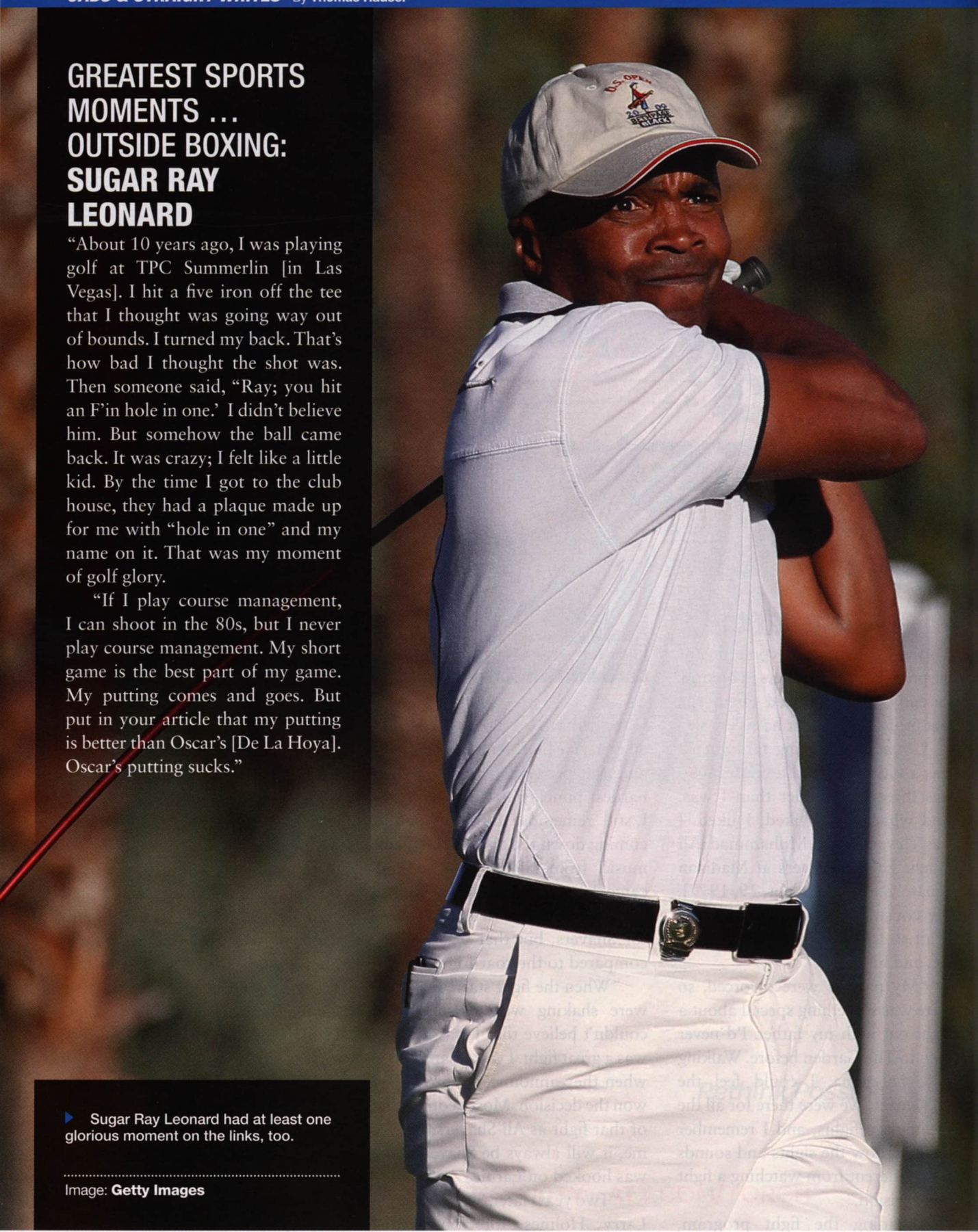
"Two years later, Shavers fought Larry Holmes for the second time. That was the fight when he knocked Holmes down and almost killed him, and Holmes came back to win. I read that Shavers was training at the Concord Hotel and decided to go see him. I was 13 by then. I cut school for a day, took a bus on my own to the Catskills and actually met Earnie Shavers. His manager was a guy named Frank Luca, who also trained Earnie. Frank took a liking to me and gave me the T-shirt that he was wearing. I still have it. It says, 'Earnie Shavers – Next Champ.'

"That was the high point of my day. The low point was when I got home and saw police cars outside the apartment house we lived in. My mother thought I'd been kidnapped and had called the police. Believe me; I got punished." ■

GREATEST SPORTS MOMENTS … OUTSIDE BOXING: SUGAR RAY LEONARD

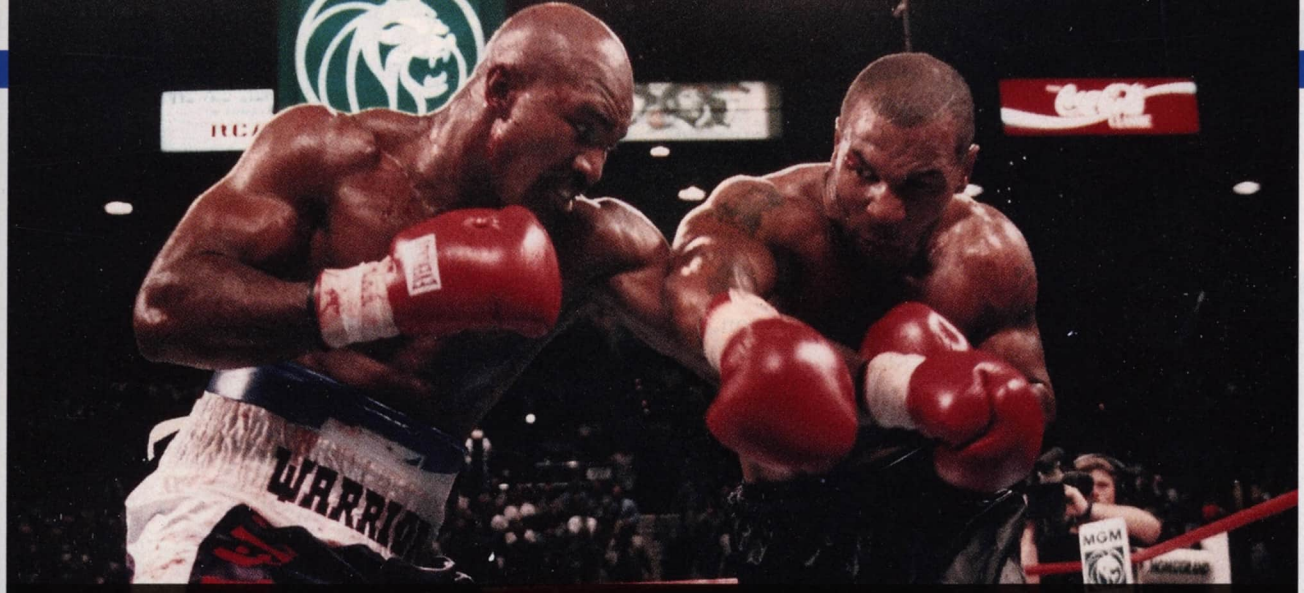
"About 10 years ago, I was playing golf at TPC Summerlin [in Las Vegas]. I hit a five iron off the tee that I thought was going way out of bounds. I turned my back. That's how bad I thought the shot was. Then someone said, "Ray; you hit an F'in hole in one.' I didn't believe him. But somehow the ball came back. It was crazy; I felt like a little kid. By the time I got to the club house, they had a plaque made up for me with "hole in one" and my name on it. That was my moment of golf glory.

"If I play course management, I can shoot in the 80s, but I never play course management. My short game is the best part of my game. My putting comes and goes. But put in your article that my putting is better than Oscar's [De La Hoya]. Oscar's putting sucks."



Sugar Ray Leonard had at least one glorious moment on the links, too.

Image: **Getty Images**



The great columnist **Jim Murray** lost some affection for boxing after watching the second **Holyfield-Tyson** bout (which featured the ear bite). Image: **THE RING**

QUESTION OF **DEVOTION**

Some of boxing's finest writers have had moments when they questioned their devotion to the sport. A sampling of their thoughts follows:

PIERCE EGAN: No men are more subject to the caprice or changes of fortune than pugilists. Victory brings them fame, riches, and patrons. Their bruises are not heeded in the smiles of success. Basking in the sunshine of prosperity, their lives pass on pleasantly until defeat comes and reverses the scene. Then, covered with aches and pains, distressed in mind and body, they are assailed by poverty, wretchedness, and misery. Their friends forsake them. Their towering fame expired and no longer the plaything of fashion, they fly to inebriation for relief, and a premature end puts a period to their misfortunes.

HUGH MCILVANNEY: My own attitude toward the issue of whether any decent society should tolerate fist-fighting has been ambivalent for years. But I must admit that, as I get older, my enthusiasm for the game is increasingly under siege from my misgivings.

JOHN SCHULIAN: The fight racket seems as repugnant as a sport could be. There is the violence, of course; the furious destruction of scar tissue, brain cells, even lives. And there are also the little murders committed with ballpoint pens in smokey back rooms.

JIM MURRAY (ON MIKE TYSON BITING OFF PART OF EVANDER HOLYFIELD'S EAR): It was boxing's lowest moment. There are many things wrong with the manly art of self-defense. But we always thought those mouthpieces were in there to protect the teeth of the wearer, not the ear of an opponent.

The man to the left is one of eight men to have fought Muhammad Ali more than once. Image: **THE RING**

QUICK QUIZ

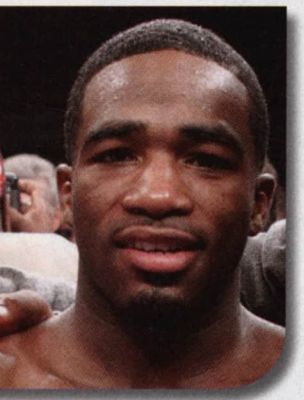
1. Rocky Marciano was the second heavyweight champion of the world to retire undefeated. Who was the first?

2. One of the greatest fighters of all time collapsed and died in the ring while refereeing a bout at St. Nicholas Arena in New York City on April 18, 1947. Who was it?

3. Eight men fought Muhammad Ali more than once during his professional career. Name them.

PLAYLIST

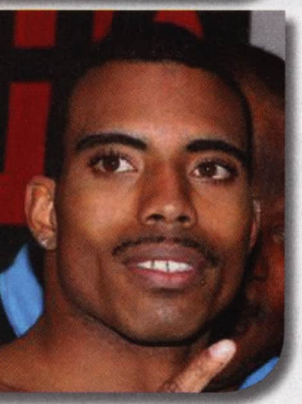
THE BANDS AND SINGERS BOXING PEOPLE ARE LISTENING TO.



ADRIEN BRONER

Trey Songz, Marques Houston, Usher, Chris Brown, Jamie Foxx

"That's how my play list goes. Sometimes I like to listen to slow music, man. But I'm amazing with this music. I'm Da Problem. That's all you got to say."



RICO RAMOS

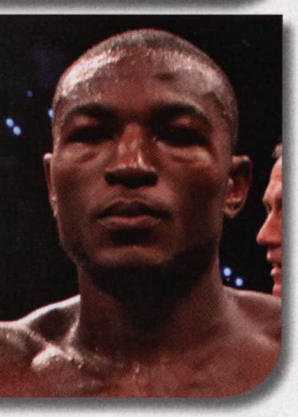
Lil Wayne, T.I., Lil Scrappy, Maroon 5, Rick Ross

"Maroon 5 has that mellow music that I can't really explain. I just like their type of music. Lil Wayne and Rick Ross, they got that get ready, pump-you-up type of thing, you know?"

ANTONIO OROZCO

Chalino Sánchez, Los Huracanes Los Rieleros, Vicente Fernandez

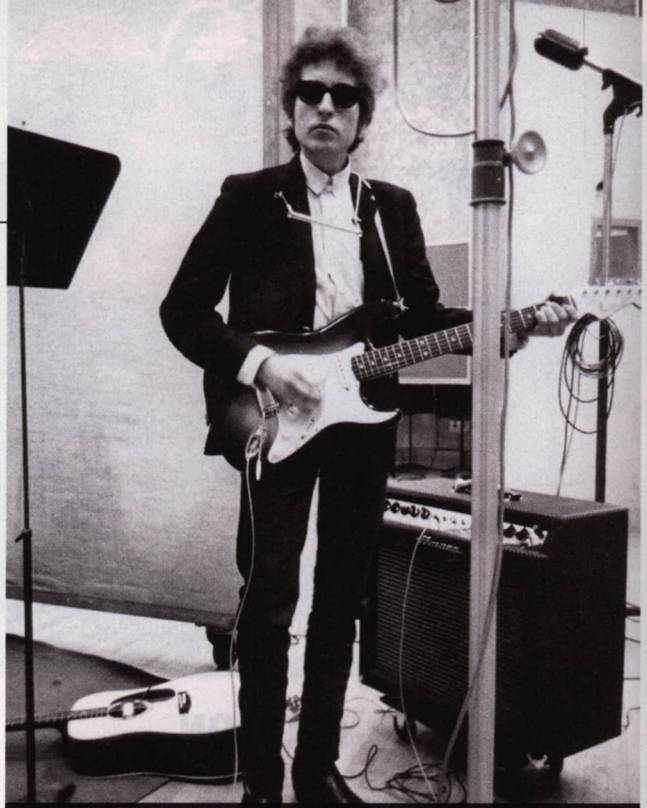
"The names of their songs, I can't give you, but I can give you my general type of music, and that's all Mexican music."



TAVORIS CLOUD

Plies, 8Ball & MJG, Rick Ross, Bun B, T-Pain

"I listen to a lot of the down south rappers. ... It's harder to become well-known if you're from the south. We just gotta grind a little bit harder. All of us pretty much come from the same situations – dope-infested neighborhoods and things of that nature."



Music legend **Bob Dylan** wrote two classic songs about boxing. Image: **Getty Images**

10

A MONTHLY BOXING LIST. THIS WEEK: SONGS ABOUT BOXERS.

1. *The Boxer*: Simon and Garfunkel
2. *Boxers*: Morrissey
3. *Hurricane*: Bob Dylan
4. *The Hitter*: Bruce Springsteen
5. *Boxing*: Ben Folds Five
6. *Who Killed Davey Moore*: Bob Dylan
7. *King Joe, Part 1*: Count Basie
8. *Boom Boom Mancini*: Warren Zevon
9. *I Think I Can Beat Mike Tyson*: DJ Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince
10. *Black Superman*: Johnny Wakelin & the Kinshasa Band

QUIZ ANSWERS: **1.** James Jeffries retired as an undefeated heavyweight champion in 1905. But five years later, he made an ill-advised comeback and was knocked out by Jack Johnson. **2.** Benny Leonard, who reigned as lightweight champion from 1917 to 1923. **3.** Henry Cooper, Floyd Patterson, George Chuvalo, Jerry Quarry, Joe Frazier, Ken Norton, Joe Bugner and Leon Spnks

Celebrity chef **Chris Santos** has been devoted to boxing since he watched fights on his grandfather's knee.

CELEBRITIES WHO ARE DEVOTED TO THE SWEET SCIENCE. ***THIS MONTH:*** *CELEBRITY CHEF*

CHRIS SANTOS

By **Michael Rosenthal**

Chris Santos is one of the most-successful chefs on the planet. He owns two posh restaurants in New York City – The Stanton Social and Beauty & Essex – and is a regular on the Food Network, most famously as a judge on *Chopped*.

In a different life, though, he'd be just as happy trading leather with a sweaty opponent who is out to hurt him.

See, Santos is about as passionate as one can get about boxing – as a long-time gym rat who loves sparring, as a devoted fan and even as a collector. He says he has almost every RING Magazine from the past 30 years.

Thus, it was no surprise that Santos graciously agreed to spend a few minutes discussing the sport he loves with a writer from his magazine of choice.

THE RING: I understand your grandfather was a boxer.
CHRIS SANTOS: Yes, on my mother's side. He fought in the early 1900s in the New England area, around the time of the transition from bare knuckles to gloves. My mother tells me he racked up quite a few fights. My grandfather on my father's side wasn't a fighter but he got me addicted to the sport at a young age. From Larry Holmes to Marvin Hagler to Sugar Ray, I basically got to know the sport on my grandfather's knee.

THE RING: Your older brother also is a big fan?
CS: He ended up becoming friends with some of the local fighters (in and around Providence, R.I., where Santos grew up). He knew Peter Manfredo's dad. He knew Joey Gamache. We would go to Maine whenever Joey would fight. I was about 15, 16 then. I didn't actually take my love for the sport into the ring until I was around 25, though. Now it's been 15 years.

THE RING: What prompted you to actually box?
CS: I moved to New York City in 1993. At that time they were doing weekly fight cards at the Ramada at Penn Station. I was going to every fight I could go to. I was about 23 when I poked my head into the old Times Square Gym but it closed shortly after that. I joined a rinky-dink gym to get my feet wet but it was more like aerobics. I thought, "I don't want this. I want to feel like a fighter." So I've been at Gleason's Gym ever since. I met Paulie Malignaggi there. And now he's an investor in my restaurants.

Chris Santos sparred with **David Telesco** for the one-time contender's ill-fated challenge against **Roy Jones Jr.**

THE RING: You sparred?
CS: I can't even tell you how many hours I've logged sparring. When David Telesco fought Roy Jones (in 2000), I sparred with him every day before that fight. That would explain why he got crushed. (Laughs.) I was good enough to spar with a guy like Telesco, who was a contender, and give him good work. That's why I think that if I started boxing earlier, if I started as a teen, I could've done something. I might've been good.

THE RING: What do you get out of sparring?
CS: Well, when I'm in the ring, it's a cleansing thing for the brain. I'm not worried about the 300 employees I have. I'm not thinking about all the stressful situations going on in my life. I don't worry about anything. I'm just in there sharpening my tools. I try to win every round; I'm very competitive. I just feel free. It's the most natural thing, just going into the ring and going at it.

THE RING: I presume you watch a lot of fights?
CS: I come to Vegas for a lot of the big fights. I always dreamed that one day I would go to one fight in Vegas. Now, if (Manny) Pacquiao or (Floyd) Mayweather or any big fighter fights I usually come out here. The last one was Pacquiao-(Shane) Mosley. That's when I met my girlfriend (Cynthia). I was invited to a big dinner I really didn't want to go to and went. When I got there, there was only one seat open – next to her. We started talking about boxing. She said, "I love boxing." So our first date was the Pacquiao-Mosley fight the next night. It was pretty fun. It wasn't like she was reading a magazine or something either. She was into it, yelling things like "go to the body." She knows what she's talking about. She lives in L.A. and trains at the Wild Card (Boxing Club).

THE RING: Who are your favorite fighters?
CS: All time? Aaron Pryor. I had the luxury of meeting him and working out with him at the gym one day. He gave me some pointers. We became friends. A close second is Marvin Hagler. I met him at a 4th of July parade when I was like 8 years old. I shook his hand. He was just larger than life. I loved the way he fought, his tenaciousness. I would rather watch the Mayweathers and Whitakers do their thing. I'm into the science of the sport. Mayweather is a punk but he's a genius in there. I don't think he gets the credit he deserves because of the way he carries himself. He's a masterful fighter. I would probably take the first round of (Alfredo) Angulo-(James) Kirkland over everything, but I like those shoulder rolls.

THE RING: Does boxing ever play a role in your day as a chef?
CS: Thomas Hauser wrote about this once. Chefs typically work 12-hour days. The way I try to get through it, if I'm particularly busy, is I look at the hours as rounds. Six down, six to go. That's how I give myself a pep talk. I talk to myself like a trainer would talk to his fighter. I'm clearly crazy. (Laughs.)

THE RING: Sounds like you're really devoted to the sport.
CS: I'm 40 now, 41 in March. I want to put myself in a position to one day get involved in the sport of boxing. I haven't figured out how. I thought about teaching kids to the point I'm capable. And I thought about getting a license to start refereeing and judging in the amateurs. I really see myself as a referee. If I start soon – I don't know how many years it takes to get to the pro level – maybe I could be a referee when I get out of this business at 55 or something. I think I'd make a good referee.

THE RING: The passion is certainly there.
CS: Yes it is. ■

Modern science helps **Nonito Donaire** step into the ring at full strength in spite of weight fluctuations. Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

SCIENCE HAS CHANGED POST WEIGH-IN RITUALS

By: **T.K. Stewart**

When the laborious weeks of toiling away in the gym are over with and the official weigh-in is behind them, fighters these days still have a long wait before they actually slink their way through the ropes to battle under the bright lights.

The era of the same day weigh-in is a thing of the past and meetings with the scales are routinely conducted up to 30 hours in advance of the opening bell. The time between the weigh-in and the fight is now used as another chance to gain every conceivable edge over the opposition.

With advances in sports science and nutrition, boxing has entered the high-tech arena when it comes to post weigh-in rituals. The practice of chugging gallons of water and Gatorade to rehydrate a dried out body is perceived to be a fool's game. Wise fighters employ not only a traditional boxing trainer but a cadre of folks who prepare meals, understand physiology, oxygen usage and body chemistry, and can even interpret blood tests.

It is these gurus who bring emaciated souls back from the gates of the bone yard to the welcoming arms of nourishment and strength.

Victor Conte is perhaps the best known of these modern-day virtuosos. When it comes to preparing a fighter to make the correct weight and then undergo a careful process to replenish his or her body with just the right mix of nutrients, electrolytes and hydration, it is Conte whom they rely on to escort them to peak form for fight night.

With several of the world's top fighters under his auspices, Conte meticulously monitors names such as Nonito Donaire, Andre Ward and Andre Berto. He recently worked his magic with Donaire, who officially weighed in at 116¼ – almost a full pound below his smaller opponent, junior bantamweight titleholder Omar Narvaez – only to show up the next night at an incredible 130 pounds. In training for the bout, Donaire cut 29 pounds over a period of weeks.

"I do have a specific protocol that I use with top fighters to help them with the cutting of weight and the hyper-hydration post weigh-in. I make slight modifications for each fighter, but I do have a protocol that I use," Conte said.

The program is tailored to each fighter depending on specific needs. Conte is a firm believer in drawing blood, examining the data and then feeding the fighters a complex mixture of nutrients to correct any deficiencies.

"Not sure that my fighters will like me giving up some of my secrets," says Conte. "I've used these protocols with Donaire, Berto, (Karim) Mayfield, (Zab) Judah and others."

The protocols include an array of specific foods, drinks, elixirs, vitamins, Pedialyte and what Conte refers to as "supplements." He even has one concoction that he has named the "pre-fight packet," which he claims does everything from increasing a fighter's focus and concentration to opening his airways to improving reaction time

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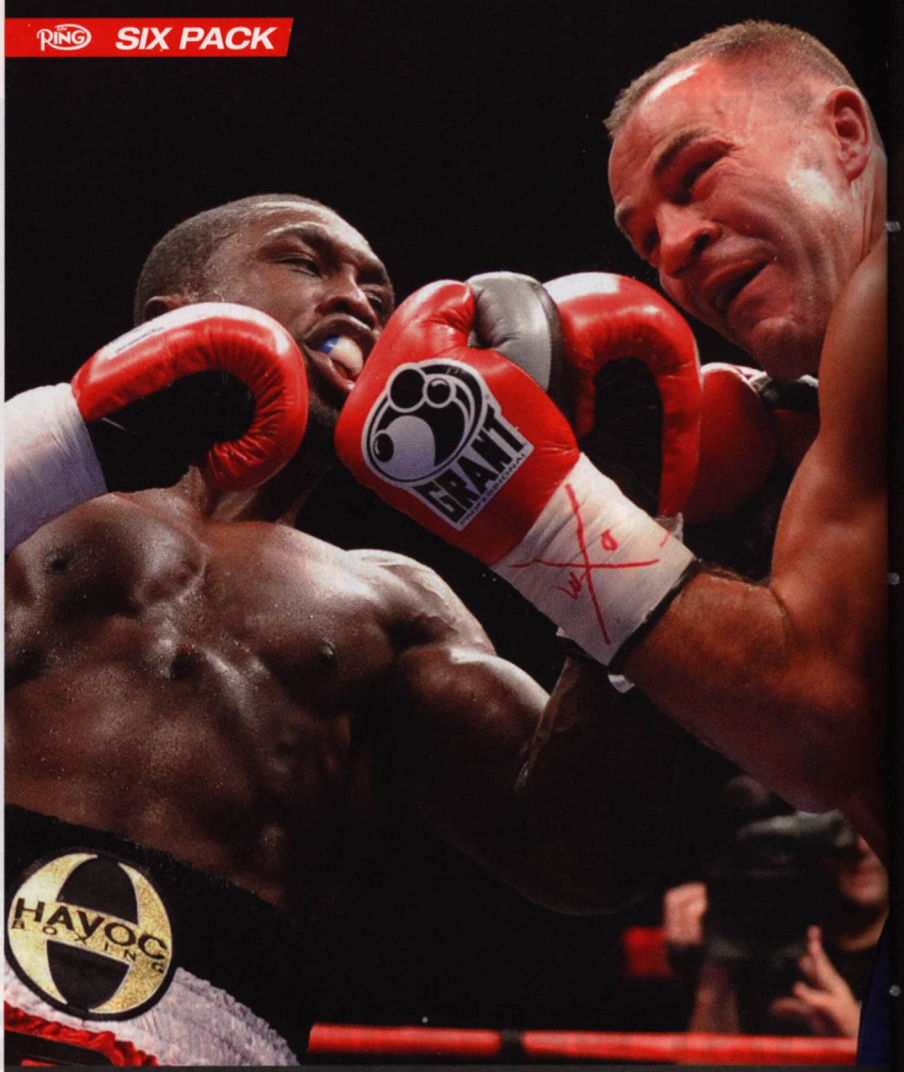

Andre Berto says fitness guru **Victor Conte's** high-tech methods have helped him tremendously. Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

– all done within the rules and timed to perfection.

As they say, "the proof is in the pudding" since Donaire and Ward are both universally regarded as top pound-for-pound fighters and welterweight titleholder Berto is not far behind.

"Victor has been tremendous for me," Berto said. "I was anemic, he found that out when I didn't know. He's like a book of knowledge. He does the tests and he brings my levels back where they need to be."

Everyone knows Roberto Duran's old school tale of woe in which he gorged himself after the weigh-in before his ill-fated rematch with Sugar Ray Leonard that, as legend has it, ended with the words "No mas!" Now, instead of suffering delirium and sickness after weigh-ins, fighters are carefully and gradually brought to the point of robust health.

"It's a much better system that is in place now," says trainer Freddie Roach, whose fighters work with strength, conditioning and diet guru Alex Ariza. "When I was fighting we basically fought on heart and guts and so forth. The guys now have all the new methods; they're healthier and stronger, I think.

"Instead of being dried out and weak, they eat good, are in a better mood and you see the results." ■

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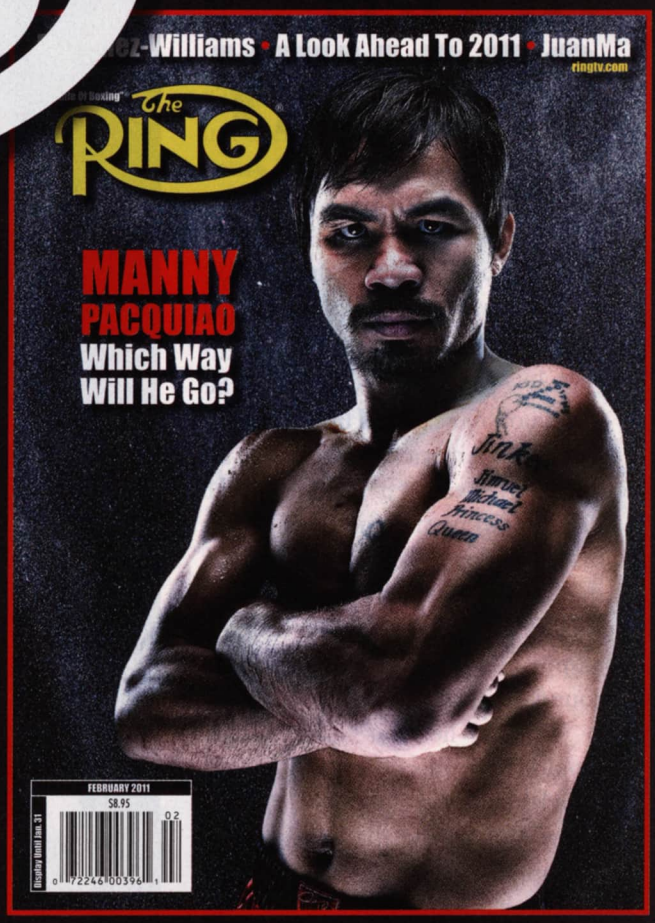

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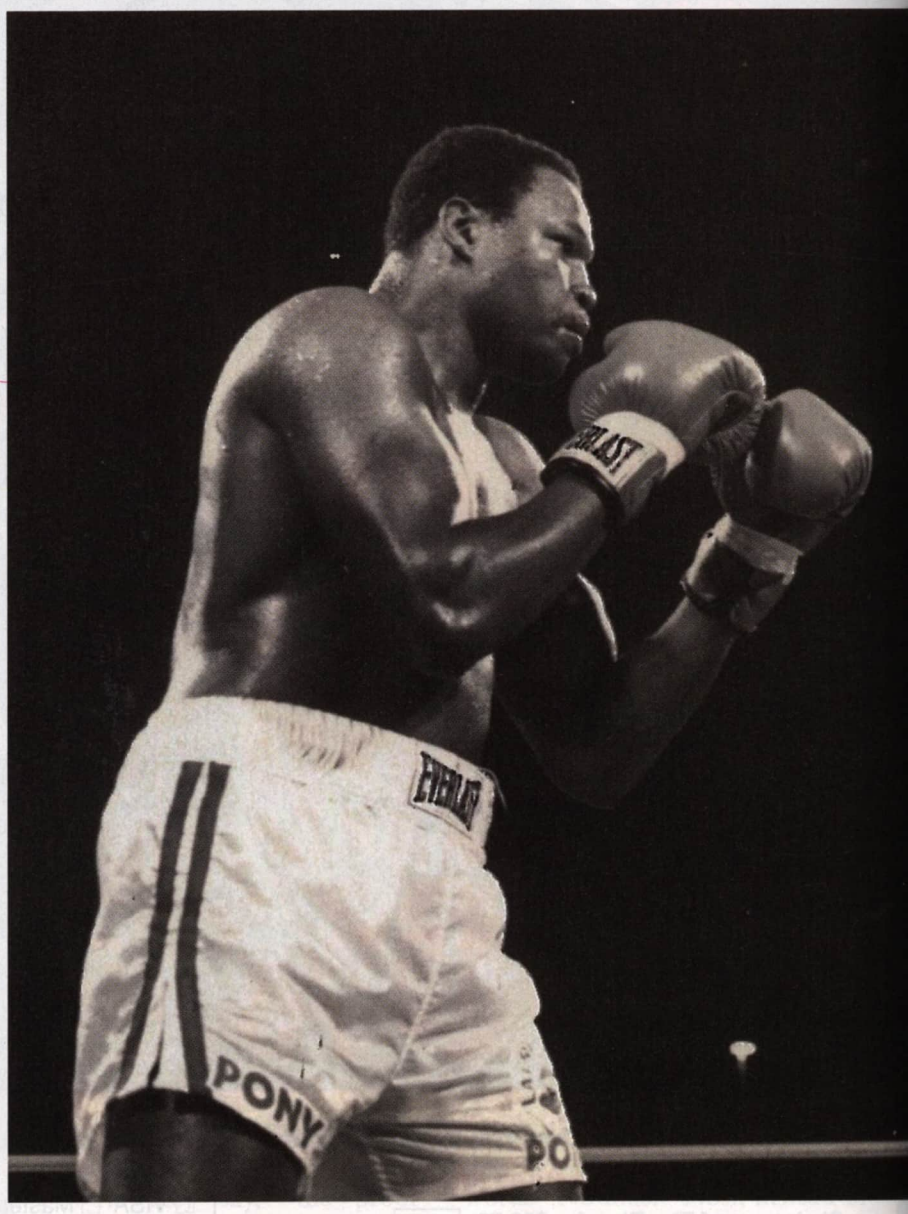
GERRY COONEY

By: **Lem Satterfield**



Gerry Cooney, a tall (6-foot-6), lean heavyweight with a world-class left hook and an engaging personality, was one of the more popular fighters in the 1980s. The Irish-American had built an impressive record of 25-0 (with 21 knockouts) by the middle of 1981, his last three victims being the murderer's row of Jimmy Young, Ron Lyle and Ken Norton. Cooney stopped them in four, one and one rounds, respectively.

To say he was a sensation would be understatement, which is why his next fight – against Larry Holmes for the heavyweight championship – was a huge event. Unfortunately for Cooney, his good fortune ran out. He fought gamely but couldn't match Holmes' remarkable skills and was stopped in the 13th round.

Cooney (28-3, 24 knockouts) was never quite the same after that. He finished his career with knockout losses to Michael Spinks and George Foreman in 1987 and 1990.

Here are the best he faced.

BEST FIGHTER: LARRY HOLMES

"Larry Holmes, no doubt about it. He just had it all. He could box, he was cute, he was smart. I hurt him a few times, and I couldn't tell. He was patient. I lacked some experience when I fought him, but he had it all. Holmes was the best that I've ever been in there with. He had the whole package."

BEST BOXER: HOLMES

"I'd have to say Holmes again, I wish that we could have fought again. That was a great experience being in there with him. He could counter punch."

BEST PUNCHER: GEORGE FOREMAN

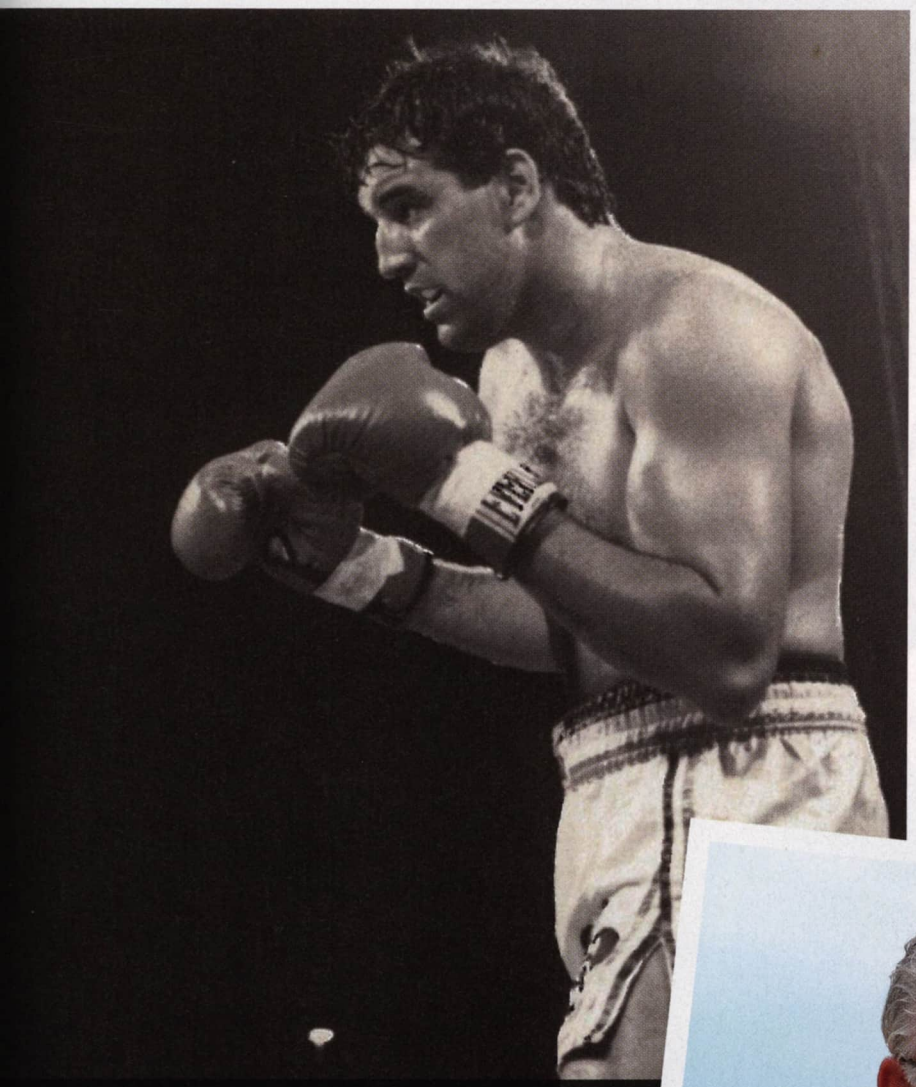
"For me, the hardest puncher I faced was George Foreman. I was a little older and I had made a comeback, but when he caught me, he hurt me. I opened up, and I hadn't fought in so many years, I was open and I got caught with a shot. That man's got some power."

BEST DEFENSE: JIMMY YOUNG

"Jimmy Young. You couldn't hit him. You had to work so hard to find an opening. He had that peek-a-boo style, and he gave everybody fits. I was able to knock him out in the fourth round, but that was because I turned a left hook into an uppercut and caught him in between his gloves and cut him above his nose. But he was just such a great defensive fighter."

FASTEST HANDS: HOLMES

"He was very patient, and he waited, but he had great hand speed



Gerry Cooney (right) said former heavyweight champion **Larry Holmes** "just had it all." Holmes stopped Cooney in 13 rounds in 1982. Image: **THE RING**

and timing. It was all about him punching in between your punches. He had that God-given ability to know when to let his hands go."

BEST CHIN: FOREMAN

"George Foreman had a solid chin. I hurt George Foreman. I may have rocked him, I may have hurt him with a body shot, with a left hook, and a left hook to the chin, but that's the most powerful guy I ever hit. He takes some shot, that guy."

BEST JAB: HOLMES

"Best jab was Larry Holmes. You know, he was just a pro and he knew how to time you and how to keep it out there. He was just a man with a phenomenal left jab."

STRONGEST: FOREMAN

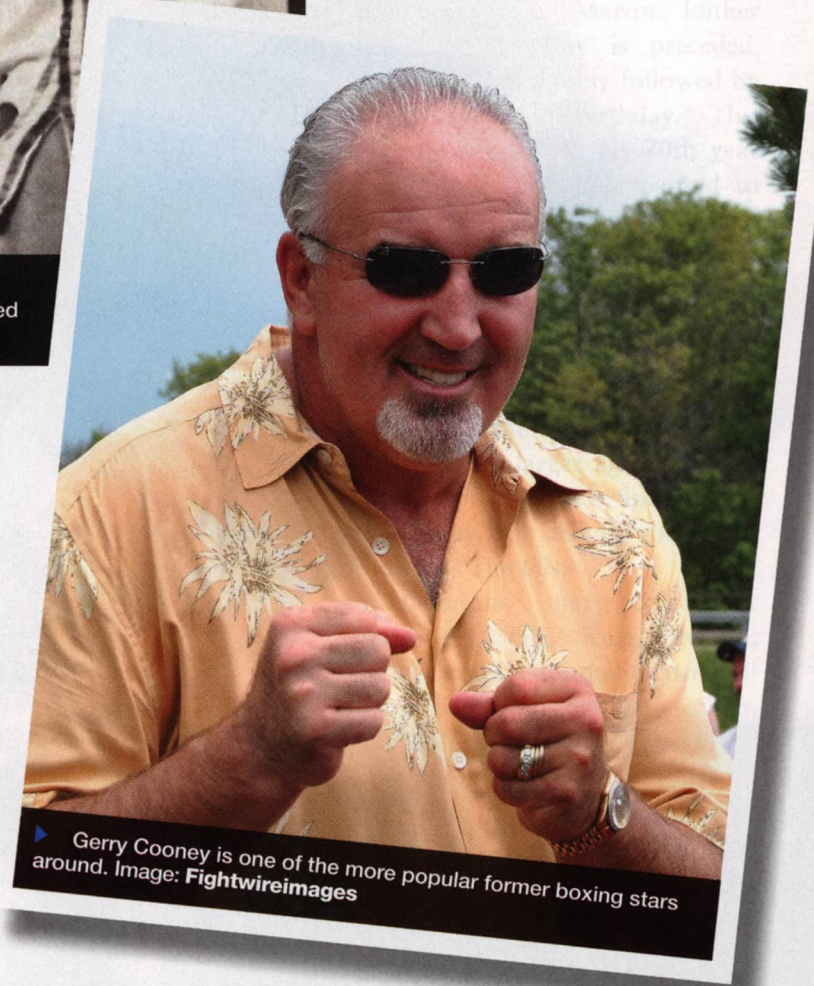
"That's Foreman. He's like a linebacker. Or he could play the entire front line."

FASTEST FEET: HOLMES

"Holmes knew when to move and get in and get out. Every time he moved, he would expose your weaknesses. He made you miss, he could stay away. He was just hard to read."

SMARTEST: HOLMES

"I would have to say Larry Holmes again. He was the man, Top 5 in history, spent a lot of years with Muhammad Ali, and that enhanced his ability." ■



Gerry Cooney is one of the more popular former boxing stars around. Image: **Fightwireimages**

EVE
AST

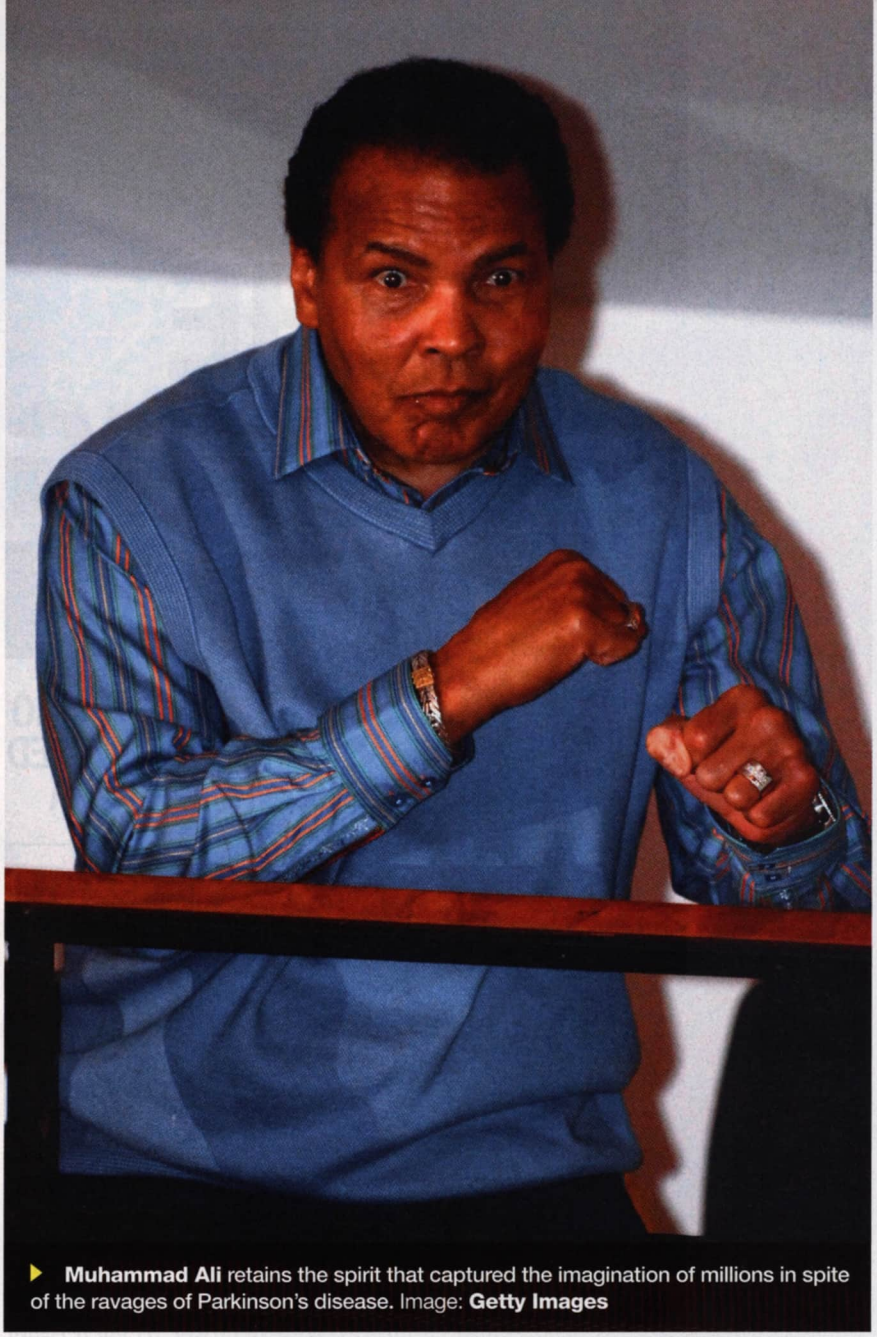
THE AGING OF ALI

THE BOXING ICON, WHO HAS TURNED 70, HELPED DEFINE A ROILING ERA

By: **Bart Barry**

Every year, Martin Luther King Jr. Day is preceded, joined or closely followed by Muhammad Ali's birthday. This year, Ali completed his 70th year the day after America paused to commemorate the life of its greatest civil rights leader. Though King and Ali were barely contemporaries and hardly peers, time is a tricky thing. Our perception of it is telescopic; figures appear closer to each other the farther one stands from them. King was the larger figure, though Ali was sport's largest, and the two men, today, help define a roiling era known as The 60s.

Historians may call that assessment facile. King, after all, was the apostle of nonviolence. Ali first achieved international acclaim for bludgeoning other men's faces with his fists as an 18-year-old Olympic boxer named Cassius Clay. King beseeched his followers to "rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force," while Ali aligned himself



Muhammad Ali retains the spirit that captured the imagination of millions in spite of the ravages of Parkinson's disease. Image: **Getty Images**

with a less-tolerant prong of the civil rights movement. But Ali became Heavyweight Champion of the World – when that title was still capitalized – just six months after King made his seminal "I Have a Dream" speech.

As The 60s move from a 10-volume study to an hour-long biopic, historians can expect to see the two icons share a similar compartment in future generations' minds.

Ali became important to us, first, by doing a manly and violent thing beautifully. Both in the ring and out, he exuded an elegance of movement unrivaled today. Even when speaking preposterous words, some true and others exaggerated, his smooth countenance and theatricality enchanted disciples and detractors alike. Contemporary imitators of Ali – and that roster includes most every American public figure in some way – lack Ali's serenity and charm. Their faces contort and veins bulge, and they forget to wink at us when they're done.

Ali challenged the American establishment much as he challenged other monstrous opponents, such as Sonny Liston and George Foreman. His pulse stuttered and eyes bulged with a false bravado when he was rightfully frightened. But that fright, and the courage that followed, made him accessible. People around the world imagined hypothetical confrontations and asked themselves what Ali would do, and then proudly envisioned themselves doing the same.

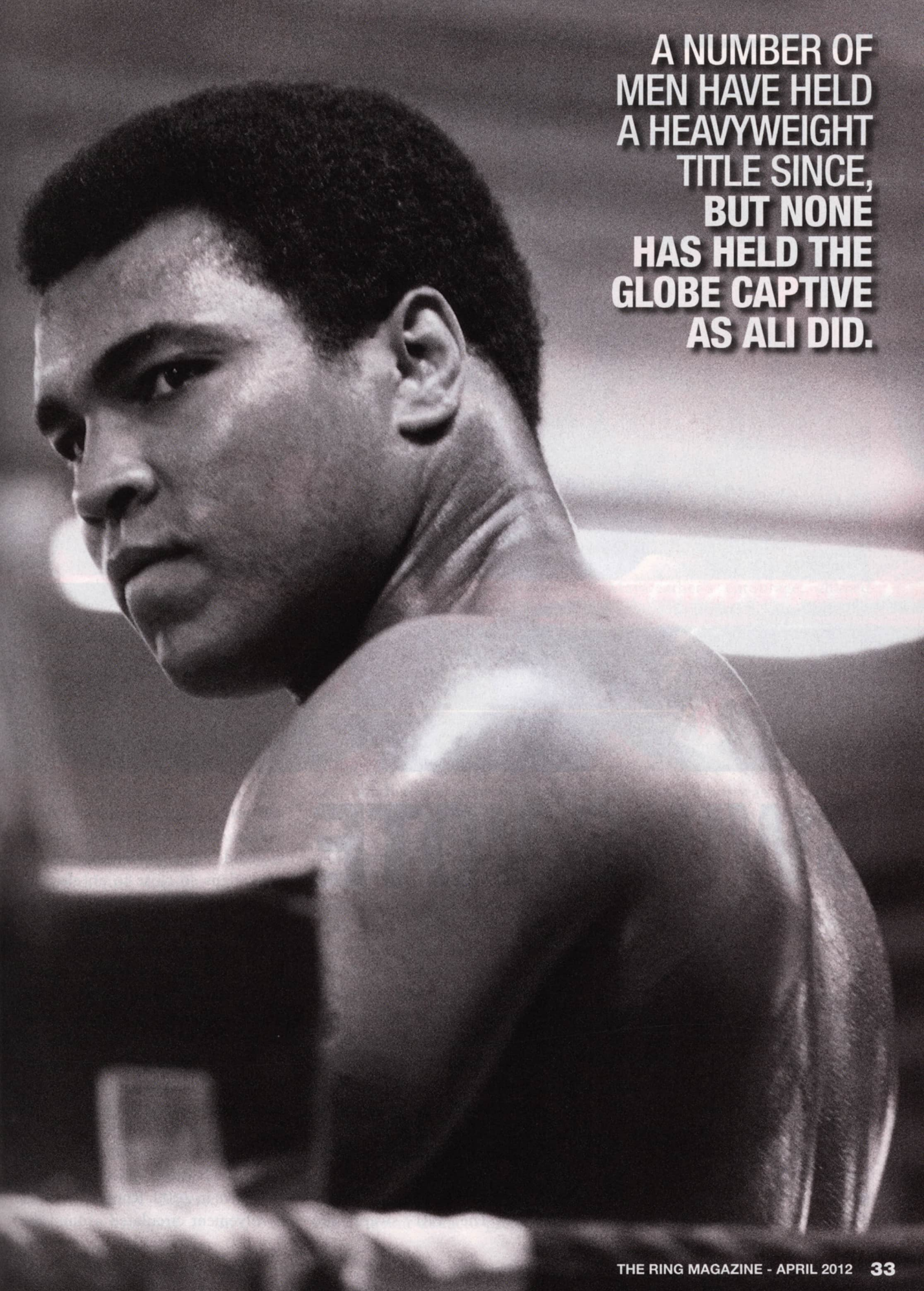
Ali's signature fighting style, a welterweight's footwork with a heavyweight's punch, brought generations of young people to boxing gyms. Ali understood the enormity of his championship and fought around the world, from Ontario to Jakarta. A number of men have held a heavyweight title since, but none has held the globe captive as Ali did.

Ali's conversion to Islam was an enormous happening in its time. Muslims everywhere know the name Muhammad Ali and still find in him a perpetual point of pride. Ali is prettiness, athleticism, bravery and charisma. What people would not want that legacy as their own?

There was an ugly side to Ali's competitiveness, yes. He took advantages outside the ring, practicing on rival Joe Frazier in a way that was mean – in the Victorian sense of the word.

But Ali is an American original, a thespian of the Gorgeous George school, and a prizefighting champion.

As the world said an unexpected goodbye to Frazier in 2010, three years after America elected its first black president, an opportunity arose to reflect on what Ali has meant to us both as an athlete and an inspiration. On the 70th birthday of the man who called himself "The Greatest," it is right to say ours is a different time for having Ali in it. ■


A NUMBER OF MEN HAVE HELD A HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE SINCE, BUT NONE HAS HELD THE GLOBE CAPTIVE AS ALI DID.

The decision to have **Juan Manuel Marquez** wear a certain patch on his trunks when he fought **Manny Pacquiao** rocked the political world back home in Mexico. Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

SWING VOTE

By **Brian Harty**

Lest one get the impression that boxing is limited to just scuttling its own high-profile contests, an election result in Mexico was overturned on Dec. 28 partly because of what **Juan Manuel Marquez** wore in his last fight. Members of incumbent president **Felipe Calderon**'s **National Action Party** (PAN) had been polling strongly in the November mayoral elections throughout Michoacan (Calderon's home state), with the president's own sister enjoying a comfortable lead in the capital city of Morelia. The night before the voting took place, however, Marquez was seen by millions on Mexican TV wearing on his trunks the emblem of the opposing **Institutional Revolutionary Party** (PRI) as he fought to yet another controversial loss against **Manny Pacquiao**. The PRI swept the elections. Protests were filed stating that Marquez's display violated rules prohibiting public campaigns so close to an election. The results in Morelia were thrown out by a federal tribunal, and a new vote was ordered within 150 days. The left-wing **Democratic Revolutionary Party** (PRD) then joined the fray, complaining that results from other parts of Michoacan should be discarded as well. The stakes are especially high ahead of upcoming national elections, as the PRI is seeking to reclaim the presidency it held for 71 years before Calderon claimed the office in 2000. Rumors of cartel involvement circulated around the

scandal, but for Marquez's part, he claimed innocence, saying he just wears the trunks, he doesn't make 'em. ... A story surfaced in late December that **Floyd "Money" Mayweather** had increased his jail commissary purchasing power by wagering a cool $1 million that the New England Patriots would smite the saintly **Tim Tebow**'s Denver Broncos on Dec. 18 – which they did, by a score of 41-23. Head-bookie-in-charge at M Resort Mike Colbert would not confirm the transaction but did tell *The Las Vegas Review-Journal*, presumably with a gleam in his eye, that Mayweather is "a valued customer who frequents the books quite often." Indeed, since most oddsmakers gave **Tom Brady**'s team a two-touchdown edge, beating the spread with a million at risk would exemplify a special sort of chutzpah. ... Not that Mayweather reserves *all* of his money for fun and games. The undefeated welterweight donated $100,000 to the Nevada branch of the **Susan G. Komen for the Cure** foundation, which will cover about one tenth of the breast cancer research and support organization's entire yearly budget. Still, Mayweather + women's health organization = awkward. And does the fact that the gift fulfilled a promise to a judge who ultimately suspended Mayweather's jail sentence so he could make millions for himself and Las Vegas on May 5 imply anything? Sometimes you just gotta cash the check. ... Meanwhile, in the recently constructed 5 billion-seat arena known as **Twitter**, Mayweather called out **Manny Pacquiao** to be his dance partner on Cinco de Mayo with these words: "Step up punk." Pacquiao characteristically deferred to the will of his promoter at first, but later expressed his preference to take that upward step. Top Rank CEO **Bob Arum** pretty much nixed the idea, however, saying that the scale of Manny's next fight would require an outdoor stadium to accommodate more paying fans, and they'd need until late May to build it. There was a lot of back and forth between camps about "guaranteed" purses, but the only guarantee is that no one understood what was being said. **Richard Schaefer** of Golden Boy dismissed Arum's reasoning as "one bulls--t story after another," and touted the combined accounts of GBP and Floyd as more than enough to guarantee that everyone would make a trizillion dollars. Arum again offered late May. Mayweather wouldn't budge from May 5, saying he was legally obligated to keep the date as per his postponement deal with the aforementioned judge. Arum called that, to paraphrase, one bulls--t story after another. Even rapper **50 Cent**, current de facto president of Mayweather's entourage, chimed in to wonder why Pacquiao was "running scared," and Floyd himself called Manny in the Philippines to talk terms. It all came to *nada* in the end, as Arum finally announced that Pacman had settled on an opponent to fight in June, and it wasn't Mayweather. The prevailing rumor was that it would be Tim Bradley, but Miguel Cotto, Juan Manuel Marquez and Lamont Peterson remained possibilities at press time. The Mayweather fight, said Arum, could happen in November. But since that would make it the inaugural bout of Floyd's post-incarceration life, the first word out of Money's mouth upon leaving the joint is likely to be "tune-up." ... And finally, **Muhammad Ali** turned 70 years old on Jan. 17. You'll find a much more fitting tribute elsewhere in this issue, but for now, here at the end, let's just savor the tranquility of a story that in no way involves "you know who" Nos. 1 and 2. ... Ahh. ■

Floyd Mayweather Jr. has used the long reach of Twitter to campaign for a showdown with Manny Pacquiao. He Tweeted this image.

CHASSIDY LUKE

THE RING CARD GIRL OF THE MONTH
BY HEATHER SHANHOLTZ

Height: 5-7 **Weight:** 135 pounds
Measurements: 34-25-35
Stance: Orthodox
Reach: 24 inches
Favorite Boxer: Floyd Mayweather Jr.
Hometown: Atlanta, Ga.
Current Location: Miami Beach
Where you've seen her: Planet Muscle, Girls of MMA, MMA Unleashed, Ultimate Fighters
Booking Info:
www.chassidyluke.com

RING

CARD GIRL OF THE MONTH

BY HEATHER SHANHOLTZ

CHASSIDY LUKE

THE RING CARD GIRL OF THE MONTH BY: **HEATHER SHANHOLTZ** | IMAGES: **SATIO PHOTOGRAPHY**

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FIGHTER OF THE MONTH:

GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX

Guillermo Rigondeaux's ascension to a world title seemed inevitable.

The Cuban defector was one of the greatest amateur fighters ever, having won two Olympic gold medals for his native country. He was only 8-0 as a pro going into his title challenge against WBA bantamweight beltholder Rico Ramos in Las Vegas, but he had the substance of a veteran.

IMAGE: NAOKI FUKUDA

And he proved it in the fight, dominating a much less polished, younger opponent before stopping him with a left to the body 1:29 into the sixth round to win his first major belt at 31.

Rigondeaux (9-0, 7 knockouts) wasn't particularly aggressive, a style that might prevent him from becoming an important attraction. However, Ramos, who was making his first defense, would tell you that Rigondeaux's hand speed and skills are formidable. The talented Angeleno was in over his head.

Afterward, Rigondeaux called out the most-respected fighter near his weight class: Nonito Donaire, with whom he shares a promoter (Bob Arum).

It's difficult to imagine anyone beating Donaire, much less a fighter with fewer than 10 fights. It might not be wise to put anything past this man, though. He clearly knows what he's doing.

Former Cuban amateur star Guillermo Rigondeaux became a major titleholder in only his ninth pro fight.

Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

RATINGS ANALYSIS

FOR PERIOD ENDING JAN. 23, 2012

POUND FOR POUND: No change.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

CRUISERWEIGHTS:
Marco Huck (No. 1 last month) was removed from the cruiserweight ratings because he has moved up to heavyweight, which allowed the other nine rated fighters to rise one notch each. That included Yoan Pablo Hernandez (No. 2 last month) and Steve Cunningham (No. 3 last month), who were elevated to Nos. 1 and 2. That allowed them to fight for THE RING championship on Feb. 4. Unbeaten Pole Mateusz Masternak entered at No. 10.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS:
Andre Dirrell (unrated last month) re-entered the ratings after returning to the ring following a 22-month hiatus, the result of an injury in his victory over Arthur Abraham in March 2010. Dirrell stopped Darryl Cunningham in two rounds in December. Abraham (No. 9 last month) fell to No. 10. James DeGale (No. 10 last month) dropped out.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS:
No change.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS:
Marcos Maidana (No. 4 last month) and Devon Alexander (No. 5 last month) exited the ratings because they've both moved up in weight, bringing everyone below up two notches and leaving room for Vernon Paris and Humberto Soto to enter at Nos. 9 and 10, respectively.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS:
Takashi Uchiyama retained his No. 1 position with an 11th-round TKO of Jorge Solis (No. 4 last month). Solis, who was behind badly on all cards at the time he was stopped, dropped to No. 8.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS:
Guillermo Rigondeaux (No. 6 last month) leaped up to No. 2 after knocking out Rico Ramos in six rounds to gain a major world title in his ninth pro fight. Ramos (No. 2 last month) fell to No. 7, pushing Steve Molitor (No. 7 last month) up to No. 6.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS:
No change.

FLYWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS:
Adrian Hernandez (No. 1 last month) was stopped by unrated Kompayak Porpamook of Thailand in the 10th round of a thriller in Bangkok. Hernandez lost both his WBC title and his rating, slipping to No. 8. Porpamook entered at No. 7. The 29-year-old from Buriram has won 22 consecutive fights.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No change.

Andre Dirrell made short work of **Darryl Cunningham** in his return to boxing.
Image: **Tom Casino-Showtime**

Robert Stieglitz (right) had no trouble finding the target in a one-sided victory over Henry Weber to retain his WBO super middleweight belt Jan. 14 in Germany.

Image: Getty Images

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine | 56-3-0 (49 KOs)

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine | 43-2-0 (40 KOs)
2. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia | 23-0-0 (16 KOs)
3. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland | 44-2-0 (28 KOs)
4. **EDDIE CHAMBERS**
US | 36-2-0 (18 KOs)
5. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO**
Ukraine | 32-1-0 (21 KOs)
6. **ROBERT HELENIUS**
Finland | 17-0-0 (11 KOs)
7. **DENIS BOYTSOV**
Russia | 29-0-0 (24 KOs)
8. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV**
Uzbekistan | 27-2-1 (17 KOs)
9. **CHRIS ARREOLA**
US | 34-2-0 (29 KOs)
10. **KUBRAT PULEV**
Bulgaria | 15-0-0 (7 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

C **VACANT**

1. **YOAN PABLO HERNANDEZ**
Cuba | 25-1-0 (13 KOs)
2. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
US | 24-3-0 (12 KOs)
3. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland | 46-2-1 (33 KOs)
4. **DENIS LEBEDEV**
Russia | 23-1-0 (17 KOs)
5. **ANTONIO TARVER**
US | 29-6-0 (20 KOs)
6. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
Italy | 29-3-1 (12 KOs)
7. **OLA AFOLABI**
UK | 18-2-3 (8 KOs)
8. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama | 38-3-2 (30 KOs)
9. **LATEEF KAYODE**
Nigeria | 18-0-0 (14 KOs)
10. **MATEUSZ MASTERNAK**
Poland | 24-0-0 (18 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

C **BERNARD HOPKINS**
US | 52-5-2 (32 KOs)

1. **JEAN PASCAL**
Canada | 26-2-1 (16 KOs)
2. **TAVORIS CLOUD**
US | 23-0-0 (19 KOs)
3. **CHAD DAWSON**
US | 31-1-0 (17 KOs)
4. **NATHAN CLEVERLY**
UK | 23-0-0 (11 KOs)
5. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Romania | 27-3-0 (15 KOs)
6. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary | 33-0-0 (18 KOs)
7. **BEIBUT SHUMENOV**
Kazakhstan | 12-1-0 (8 KOs)
8. **KARO MURAT**
Germany | 24-1-1 (14 KOs)
9. **GABRIEL CAMPILLO**
Spain | 21-3-1 (8 KOs)
10. **ISMAYL SILLAKH**
Ukraine | 17-0-0 (13 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

C **ANDRE WARD**
US | 25-0-0 (13 KOs)

1. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Romania | 30-0-0 (24 KOs)
2. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark | 44-2-0 (33 KOs)
3. **CARL FROCH**
UK | 28-2-0 (20 KOs)
4. **ROBERT STIEGLITZ**
Russia | 41-2-0 (23 KOs)
5. **SAKIO BIKA**
Cameroon | 29-5-2 (20 KOs)
6. **THOMAS OOSTHUIZEN**
South Africa | 17-0-1 (12 KOs)
7. **GEORGE GROVES**
UK | 14-0-0 (11 KOs)
8. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica | 51-15-2 (35 KOs)
9. **ANDRE DIRRELL**
US | 20-1-0 (14 KOs)
10. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Armenia | 33-3-0 (27 KOs)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

C **SERGIO MARTINEZ**
Argentina | 48-2-2 (27 KOs)

1. **DANIEL GEALE**
Australia | 26-1-0 (15 KOs)
2. **FELIX STURM**
Germany | 36-2-2 (15 KOs)
3. **MATTHEW MACKLIN**
UK | 28-3-0 (19 KOs)
4. **GRZEGORZ PROKSA**
Poland | 26-0-0 (19 KOs)
5. **JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ JR.**
Mexico | 44-0-1 (31 KOs)
6. **SEBASTIAN ZBIK**
Germany | 30-1-0 (10 KOs)
7. **DMITRY PIROG**
Russia | 19-0-0 (15 KOs)
8. **HASSAN N'DAM N'JIKAM**
France | 26-0-0 (17 KOs)
9. **MARTIN MURRAY**
UK | 23-0-1 (10 KOs)
10. **GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
Kazakhstan | 22-0-0 (19 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

C **VACANT**

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico | 37-2-0 (30 KOs)
2. **SAUL ALVAREZ**
Mexico | 39-0-1 (29 KOs)
3. **VANES MARTIROSYAN**
US | 31-0-0 (19 KOs)
4. **ERISLANDY LARA**
Cuba | 15-1-1 (10 KOs)
5. **CARLOS MOLINA**
Mexico | 19-4-2 (6 KOs)
6. **JAMES KIRKLAND**
US | 30-1-0 (27 KOs)
7. **ALFREDO ANGULO**
Mexico | 20-2-0 (17 KOs)
8. **CORNELIUS BUNDRAGE**
US | 31-4-0 (18 KOs)
9. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK**
Ukraine | 37-1-0 (23 KOs)
10. **DELVIN RODRIGUEZ**
Dom. Republic | 26-5-3 (14 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

C **VACANT**

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines | 54-3-2 (38 KOs)
2. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.**
US | 42-0-0 (26 KOs)
3. **VICTOR ORTIZ**
US | 29-3-2 (22 KOs)
4. **ANDRE BERTO**
US | 28-1-0 (22 KOs)
5. **VYACHESLAV SENCHENKO**
Ukraine | 32-0-0 (21 KOs)
6. **KELL BROOK**
UK | 26-0-0 (18 KOs)
7. **MIKE JONES**
US | 26-0-0 (19 KOs)
8. **JAN ZAVECK**
Slovenia | 31-2-0 (18 KOs)
9. **SELCUK AYDIN**
Turkey | 23-0-0 (17 KOs)
10. **SHANE MOSLEY**
US | 46-7-1 (39 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

C **VACANT**

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
US | 28-0-0 (12 KOs)
2. **LAMONT PETERSON**
US | 30-1-1 (15 KOs)
3. **AMIR KHAN**
UK | 26-2-0 (18 KOs)
4. **LUCAS MATTHYSSE**
Argentina | 29-2-0 (27 KOs)
5. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico | 52-7-0 (36 KOs)
6. **ZAB JUDAH**
US | 41-7-0 (28 KOs)
7. **DANNY GARCIA**
US | 22-0-0 (14 KOs)
8. **MIKE ALVARADO**
US | 32-0-0 (23 KOs)
9. **VERNON PARIS**
US | 26-0-0 (15 KOs)
10. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico | 57-7-2 (34 KOs)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

C **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico | 53-6-1 (39 KOs)

1. **BRANDON RIOS**
US | 29-0-1 (22 KOs)
2. **ROBERT GUERRERO**
US | 29-1-1 (18 KOs)
3. **ANTONIO DEMARCO**
Mexico | 26-2-1 (19 KOs)
4. **MIGUEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico | 30-3-0 (13 KOs)
5. **KEVIN MITCHELL**
UK | 32-1-0 (24 KOs)
6. **PAULUS MOSES**
Namibia | 28-1-0 (19 KOs)
7. **RICKY BURNS**
UK | 33-2-0 (9 KOs)
8. **JOHN MURRAY**
UK | 31-1-0 (18 KOs)
9. **JOHN MOLINA**
US | 23-1-0 (19 KOs)
10. **RICHARD ABRIL**
Cuba | 17-2-1 (8 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

C **VACANT**

1. **TAKASHI UCHIYAMA**
Japan | 18-0-0 (15 KOs)
2. **JUAN CARLOS SALGADO**
Mexico | 24-1-1 (16 KOs)
3. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
Puerto Rico | 25-1-1 (16 KOs)
4. **TAKAHIRO AO**
Japan | 22-2-1 (10 KOs)
5. **ADRIEN BRONER**
US | 22-0-0 (18 KOs)
6. **DIEGO MAGDALENO**
US | 21-0-0 (7 KOs)
7. **ARGENIS MENDEZ**
Dom. Republic | 19-2-0 (10 KOs)
8. **JORGE SOLIS**
Mexico | 40-4-2 (29 KOs)
9. **ELOY PEREZ**
US | 23-0-2 (7 KOs)
10. **JUAN CARLOS BURGOS**
Mexico | 28-1-0 (19 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

C **VACANT**

1. **YURIORKIS GAMBOA**
Cuba | 21-0-0 (16 KOs)
2. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia | 46-0-2 (22 KOs)
3. **ORLANDO SALIDO**
Mexico | 37-11-2 (25 KOs)
4. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico | 31-1-0 (28 KOs)
5. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON**
Mexico | 42-4-0 (35 KOs)
6. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico | 40-7-0 (36 KOs)
7. **JHONNY GONZALEZ**
Mexico | 51-7-0 (45 KOs)
8. **MIKEY GARCIA**
US | 27-0-0 (23 KOs)
9. **BILL DIB**
Australia | 33-1-0 (20 KOs)
10. **CELESTINO CABALLERO**
Panama | 36-4-0 (23 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

C **VACANT**

1. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan | 39-4-3 (24 KOs)
2. **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
Cuba | 9-0-0 (7 KOs)
3. **AKIFUMI SHIMODA**
Japan | 24-3-1 (10 KOs)
4. **P. KRATINGDAENGGYM**
Thailand | 45-2-0 (31 KOs)
5. **TAKALANI NDLOVU**
South Africa | 33-6-0 (18 KOs)
6. **STEVE MOLITOR**
Canada | 34-2-0 (12 KOs)
7. **RICO RAMOS**
US | 20-1-0 (11 KOs)
8. **WILFREDO VAZQUEZ JR.**
Puerto Rico | 21-1-1 (18 KOs)
9. **MASAAKI SERIE**
Japan | 20-4-0 (9 KOs)
10. **VICTOR TERRAZAS**
Mexico | 32-2-1 (18 KOs)

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BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

C **VACANT**

1. **ANSELMO MORENO**
   Panama | 32-1-1 (11 KOs)
2. **ABNER MARES**
   US | 23-0-1 (13 KOs)
3. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
   Ghana | 28-4-0 (22 KOs)
4. **ERIC MOREL**
   US | 46-2-0 (23 KOs)
5. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Armenia | 37-4-1 (27 KOs)
6. **YONNHY PEREZ**
   Colombia | 20-2-1 (14 KOs)
7. **KOKI KAMEDA**
   Japan | 27-1-0 (17 KOs)
8. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines | 29-2-3 (18 KOs)
9. **SHINSUKE YAMANAKA**
   Japan | 15-0-2 (11 KOs)
10. **JORGE ARCE**
    Mexico | 59-6-2 (45 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

C **VACANT**

1. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina | 35-1-2 (19 KOs)
2. **SURIYAN SOR RUNGVISAI**
   Thailand | 20-4-1 (7 KOs)
3. **TOMONOBU SHIMIZU**
   Japan | 19-3-1 (9 KOs)
4. **HUGO CAZARES**
   Mexico | 36-7-2 (26 KOs)
5. **TEPPARITH KOKIETGYM**
   Thailand | 19-2-0 (12 KOs)
6. **TOMAS ROJAS**
   Mexico | 36-13-1 (24 KOs)
7. **YOTA SATO**
   Japan | 23-2-1 (12 KOs)
8. **CESAR SEDA**
   Puerto Rico | 21-1-0 (15 KOs)
9. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
   Japan | 16-4-1 (10 KOs)
10. **RODRIGO GUERRERO**
    Mexico | 16-3-1 (10 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

C **P. WONJONGKAM**
Thailand | 83-3-2 (45 KOs)

1. **HERNAN MARQUEZ**
   Mexico | 32-2-0 (25 KOs)
2. **BRIAN VILORIA**
   US | 30-3-0 (17 KOs)
3. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
   S. Africa | 28-2-0 (19 KOs)
4. **MILAN MELINDO**
   Philippines | 25-0-0 (9 KOs)
5. **ROCKY FUENTES**
   Philippines | 29-6-2 (17 KOs)
6. **JULIO CESAR MIRANDA**
   Mexico | 37-6-1 (29 KOs)
7. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
   Panama | 23-3-0 (18 KOs)
8. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
   Argentina | 27-1-0 (16 KOs)
9. **TOSHIYUKI IGARASHI**
   Japan | 15-1-1 (10 KOs)
10. **EDGAR SOSA**
    Mexico | 44-7-0 (27 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

C **VACANT**

1. **GILBERTO KEB BAAS**
   Mexico | 35-21-4 (22 KOs)
2. **ULISES SOLIS**
   Mexico | 34-2-3 (21 KOs)
3. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
   Nicaragua | 30-0-0 (25 KOs)
4. **LUIS ALBERTO LAZARTE**
   Argentina | 49-10-2 (18 KOs)
5. **DONNIE NIETES**
   Philippines | 29-1-3 (16 KOs)
6. **MASAYUKI KURODA**
   Japan | 21-3-0 (13 KOs)
7. **KOMPAYAK PORPRAMOOK**
   Thailand | 44-3-0 (30 KOs)
8. **ADRIAN HERNANDEZ**
   Mexico | 22-2-1 (14 KOs)
9. **RYO MIYAZAKI**
   Japan | 16-0-3 (10 KOs)
10. **RAMON HIRALES**
    Mexico | 16-3-1 (9 KOs)

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

C **VACANT**

1. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
   S. Africa | 21-0-0 (15 KOs)
2. **KAZUTO IOKA**
   Japan | 9-0-0 (6 KOs)
3. **MOISES FUENTES**
   Mexico | 14-1-0 (6 KOs)
4. **RAUL GARCIA**
   Mexico | 31-2-1 (18 KOs)
5. **JUAN PALACIOS**
   Nicaragua | 29-3-0 (22 KOs)
6. **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
   Thailand | 20-0-0 (5 KOs)
7. **DENVER CUELLO**
   Philippines | 29-4-6 (19 KOs)
8. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
   Japan | 24-4-0 (10 KOs)
9. **FLORANTE CONDES**
   Philippines | 25-6-1 (21 KOs)
10. **AKIRA YAEGASHI**
    Japan | 15-2-0 (8 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Philippines | 54-3-2 (38 KOs) | WELTERWEIGHT
2. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR**
   US | 42-0-0 (26 KOs) | WELTERWEIGHT
3. **SERGIO MARTINEZ**
   Argentina | 48-2-2 (27 KOs) | MIDDLEWEIGHT
4. **NONITO DONAIRE**
   Philippines | 27-1-0 (18 KOs) | JR. FEATHERWEIGHT
5. **ANDRE WARD**
   US | 25-0-0 (13 KOs) | SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT
6. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
   Mexico | 53-6-1 (39 KOs) | LIGHTWEIGHT
7. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
   Ukraine | 56-3-0 (49 KOs) | HEAVYWEIGHT
8. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand | 83-3-2 (45 KOs) | FLYWEIGHT
9. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
   US | 28-0-0 (12 KOs) | JR. WELTERWEIGHT
10. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
    Ukraine | 43-2-0 (40 KOs) | HEAVYWEIGHT

HOW OUR RATINGS ARE COMPILED

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the Top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's No. 1 and No. 2 contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our No. 1 and No. 3 contenders.

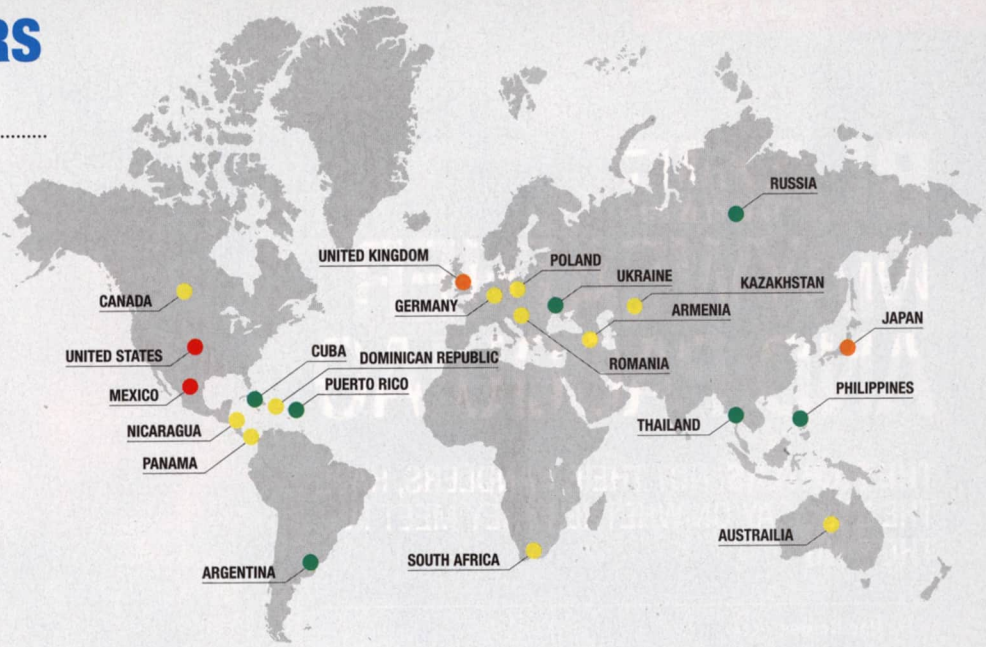
The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on RATINGS at RingTV.com.

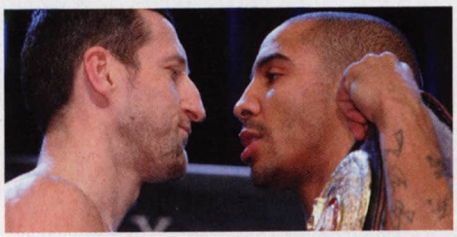
Records provided by boxrec.com

RATED FIGHTERS BY COUNTRY

UNITED STATES	34
MEXICO	30
JAPAN	16
UNITED KINGDOM	11
PHILIPPINES	7
THAILAND	6
UKRAINE	6
ARGENTINA	5
CUBA	5
PUERTO RICO	5
RUSSIA	5
SOUTH AFRICA	4
PANAMA	4
POLAND	4
GERMANY	3
AUSTRALIA	2
CANADA	2
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	2
KAZAKHSTAN	2
NICARAGUA	2
ROMANIA	2
ARMENIA	2
BULGARIA	1
CAMEROON	1
COLOMBIA	1
DENMARK	1
FINLAND	1
FRANCE	1
GHANA	1
HUNGARY	1
INDONESIA	1
ITALY	1
JAMAICA	1
NAMIBIA	1
NIGERIA	1
SLOVENIA	1
SPAIN	1
TURKEY	1
UZBEKISTAN	1



● 30 OR MORE ● 20 - 29 ● 10 - 19 ● 5 - 9 ● 2 - 4



N. AMERICA VS. EUROPE

DIVISION	N. AMER.	EUROPE
HEAVYWEIGHTS	2	8
CRUISERWEIGHTS	4	5
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS	4	7
SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	3	5
MIDDLEWEIGHTS	1	7
JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	9	1
WELTERWEIGHTS	5	4
JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	8	1
LIGHTWEIGHTS	7	3
JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	8	0
FEATHERWEIGHTS	8	0
JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	5	0
BANTAMWEIGHTS	4	1
JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	4	0
FLYWEIGHTS	5	0
JR. FLYWEIGHTS	5	0
STRAWWEIGHTS	3	0
TOTAL	**85**	**42**

WEIGHT WATCHERS

SOME FIGHTERS SPEND YEARS IN THE SAME WEIGHT CLASS. HERE'S A LIST OF THE FIGHTERS WHO HAVE BEEN RATED IN A SINGLE DIVISION FOR THE LONGEST PERIOD OF TIME (IN NUMBER OF WEEKS).

567 **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**, FLYWEIGHT
436 **FELIX STURM**, MIDDLEWEIGHT
425 **MANNY PACQUIAO**, POUND FOR POUND
404 **ULISES SOLIS**, JR. FLYWEIGHT
404 **DENVER CUELLO**, STRAWWEIGHT
395 **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**, CRUISERWEIGHT
391 **CHRIS JOHN**, FEATHERWEIGHT
373 **MIKKEL KESSLER**, SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT
352 **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**, STRAWWEIGHT
348 **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**, HEAVYWEIGHT
345 **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**, CRUISERWEIGHT
325 **STEVE MOLITOR**, JR. FEATHERWEIGHT
303 **LUCIAN BUTE**, SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT
294 **BERNARD HOPKINS**, LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT
294 **CHAD DAWSON**, LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT
294 **CARL FROCH**, SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT
288 **NOBUO NASHIRO**, JR. BANTAMWEIGHT

NOTE: *The country of fighters who have spent large portions of their lives in two countries was determined primarily by where they spent the bulk of their childhood.*

BLAME MAYWEATHER AND PACQUIAO

THE FIGHTERS, NOT THEIR HANDLERS, HAVE THE LAST SAY ON WHETHER THEY MEET IN THE RING

By: **Ron Borges**

In the end, Seth Abraham always knew who really made big fights.

"You can't make two men fight," the former longtime president of HBO Sports was fond of saying when a negotiation would get sticky or collapse all together. "Checks don't make men fight. Television networks can't make men fight. They fight because they want to."

For all the reasons Floyd Mayweather, Jr. and Manny Pacquiao went three long years without making the one fight the world wants to see, what Abraham said so often during his 23 years at HBO still rings true. Fighters make fights. Businessmen block them.

When Evander Holyfield's representatives were negotiating with Don King for his first fight with Mike Tyson, the match seemed bogged down in financial minutiae and unlikely to happen after two previous false starts. Holyfield's people kept demanding $4 million more than King was ready to pay and Holyfield knew he was worth the extra money. Yet after growing weary of the endless negotiations, Holyfield finally flew to Toronto and met directly with King, accepting the fight at the promoter's price.

He then knocked Tyson out and made back that $4 million and then some in a rematch worth $25 million to him. Holyfield bet on himself in the first Tyson fight, refusing to allow his negotiators to decide who he would box. Once he took that step, they followed meekly behind, nodding their heads in agreement.

In the end, promoters, managers and even the cable networks that pay them all work for the boxer. It's not the other way around, although most boxers never seem to understand that or come to grips with the power it gives them.

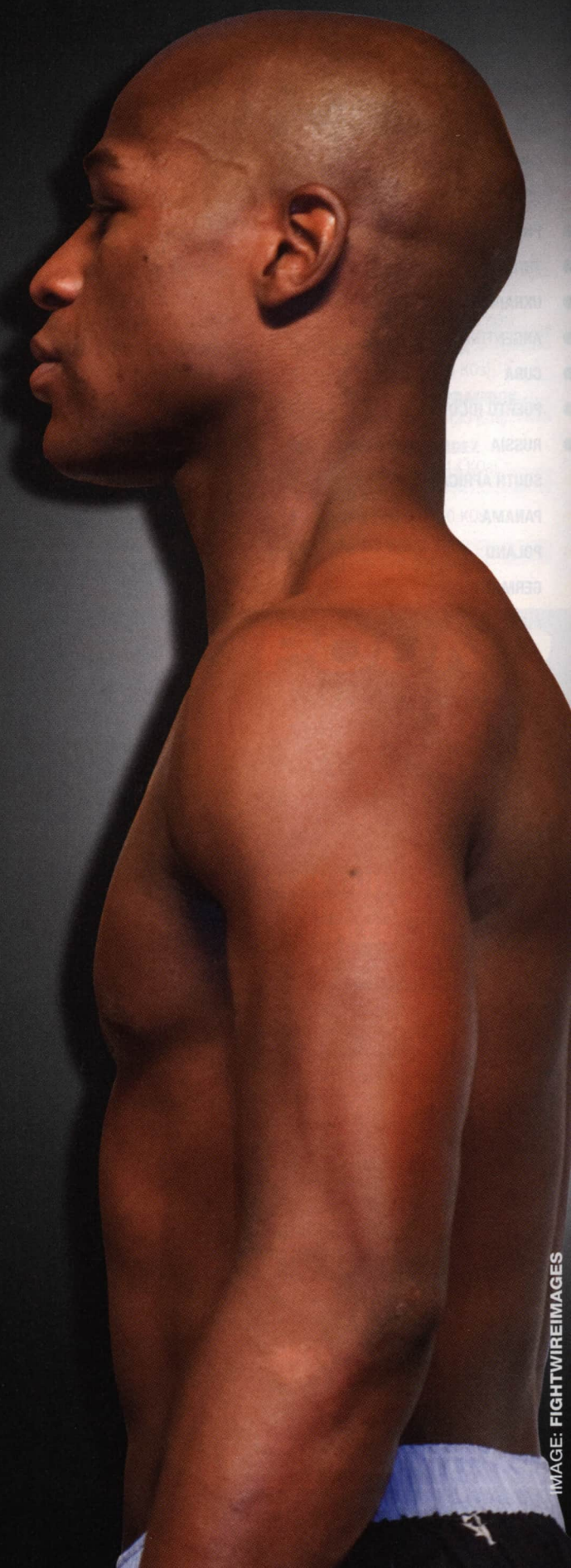


IMAGE: FIGHTWIREIMAGES

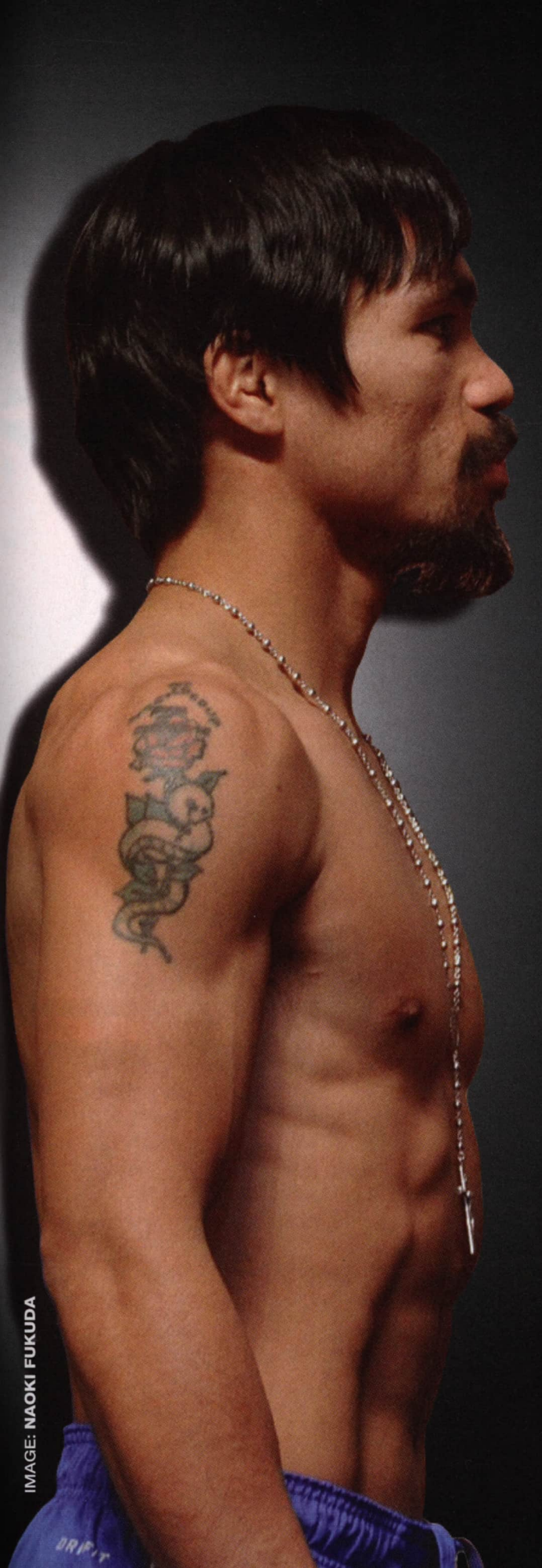


IMAGE: NAOKI FUKUDA

"CHECKS DON'T MAKE MEN FIGHT. TELEVISION NETWORKS CAN'T MAKE MEN FIGHT. THEY FIGHT BECAUSE THEY WANT TO."

– SETH ABRAHAM,
FORMER PRESIDENT OF HBO SPORTS

For the past three years Mayweather and Pacquiao have found themselves in a similar situation as Holyfield did. They are the two most popular and powerful boxers in the world. Every time they fight they make tens of millions of dollars for themselves and generate many tens of millions more for cable networks, cable operators, promoters, managers, trainers, casino owners, casino hosts, casino cocktail waitresses, accountants, lawyers, advisors, spiritual advisors, hangers on and, of course, the Internal Revenue Service.

If they insist their promoter make a fight and they tell him they will fight no one else if he doesn't, promoters quickly come to heel, at least they do for fistic ATMs with the drawing power of Pacquiao and Mayweather. That even includes those as big as Bob Arum, who runs Pacquiao's boxing career, or Al Haymon, who orchestrates Mayweather's, or Golden Boy Promotions, which doesn't run Mayweather's affairs but does negotiate on his behalf.

Early in this process Mayweather insisted Pacquiao agree to random Olympic-style blood testing right up to the day of the fight, an effort he said would insure the absence of the performance-enhancing drugs that have made other sports a mockery. Pacquiao refused, initially claiming a fear of needles before being reminded he had enough tattoos on him to work in the circus.

Faced with that reality, Pacquiao then said he was fearful of having blood taken just before a fight because it might weaken him. When Mayweather asked what happens if he gets cut in a fight, he had no good response beyond saying: "No thank you."

Later, however, Pacquiao agreed to random testing,

but that wasn't enough to get Mayweather to sign, in large part because he hates Arum (his former promoter) and apparently didn't want to see him make a nickel off him even though he'd make more fighting Pacquiao than with any two other opponents you could think of. The fear in this always was that if the process continued to drag out, it would end like the dream of a Lennox Lewis-Riddick Bowe fight. It would end badly.

Those two heavyweights never faced off in what surely would have been a tremendous fight because at one point Lewis' people didn't have enough faith in him to make the match and Bowe's representatives felt the same about him. So time passed, things happened, Bowe became fat and disinterested, Lewis got knocked out by Oliver McCall and a potential heavyweight rivalry akin to Bowe-Holyfield never happened.

When a deal takes too long to come to fruition, it tends to rot at its core. Unexpected things occur. In the case of Mayweather, he was sentenced to 87 days in jail beginning Jan. 6 on a domestic battery charge but later had the sentence delayed until June 1 so he could fulfill a previously agreed to fight date on May 5 at the MGM Grand Garden Arena. His attorney who negotiated that change says it would be all but impossible to go back to the judge and say, "How about a few more weeks because, you know, it's boxing." He seemed to have a point.

Mayweather will be 35 by the time he fights on May 5. Pacquiao will be 34 in December. Age is becoming another complicating issue in this. Worse, Pacquiao has already been in more than a few wars and shown some signs of slippage. More importantly, he's now a popular politician back in the Philippines whose election to Congress some feel is a precursor to running for that nation's Presidency. And he will face re-election in May, 2013, another barrier to a fight until late next year.

The point of all this is that the window is closing on both of them and Mayweather seemed to finally realize that when he issued two Twitter challenges to Pacquiao on Jan. 11 to become his May 5 opponent.

"Manny Pacquiao I'm calling you out let's fight May 5th and give the world what they want to see," Mayweather tweeted. Soon after he added, "My Jail Sentence was pushed back because the date was locked in. Step up Punk."

For months Golden Boy Promotions' namesake, Oscar De La Hoya, had been tweeting insults in Arum's direction, insisting he was the reason the fight had not been made. To some degree he had a point but by now there's more than enough blame to go around for the absence of the biggest boxing event of the New Millennium and further insults seemed counterproductive.

Mayweather's latest approach was not the smoothest way to negotiate what figures to be the highest grossing fight in boxing history, but it was enough to cause Arum to break out in prickly heat. The 80-year-old promoter claimed the 29 stitches Pacquiao had after his Nov. 12 fight with Juan Manuel Marquez would prevent him from fighting in May because he would not be cleared to spar until April.

Almost before Mayweather could react, Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, dismissed that notion saying, "Cuts do take time to heal, but I don't think that's a big issue, to be honest with you." He should know since he once had three cuts needing 24 stitches to close and fought a month later.

Arum quickly changed his tack, moving away from

Floyd Mayweather Jr.'s (right) advisors (including Leonard Ellerbe) provide input but ultimately Mayweather and rival **Manny Pacquiao** must decide whether to fight one another. Image: **Fightwireimages**

that issue and claiming they needed until late May to construct a temporary 45,000 seat outdoor arena on the Las Vegas strip to maximize the fight's income. Arum insisted that instead of the estimated $20 million in sales for a fight at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, which seats 17,000, an outdoor fight could gross as much as $45 million.

Arum called it "an economic problem" and apparently convinced Pacquiao's financial advisor, Michael Koncz, that it would be "insane" to leave Manny's end of an additional $30 million off the table simply to fight when Mayweather wanted.

Well, what is anybody's end of zero, which is what the fight has grossed up to this point because it hasn't been made? Had they fought when the fight was first suggested, they could have done it two or three times by now and made that $30 million three times over but, hey, who's counting?

Although Roach says he has no say in who Pacquiao fights, he has the instincts of a lifelong boxing insider and what his instincts have been telling him is the public has grown weary of the constant bickering and is beginning to turn on the whole idea of the fight. It is why he came out saying he badly wanted the fight, insisting Pacquiao has reached the point where he needs big challenges to properly motivate himself to prepare to fight.

As with most people who have spent their lives in boxing, Roach has too often seen big moments missed because small roadblocks began to adversely affect a fighter's motivation. Bowe was one of those but far

from the first or the last.

So why has this dragged on even after Mayweather issued his challenge with the weight of a prison sentence hanging over his head and Pacquiao's trainer came out in favor of it? Only the businessmen know, but Mayweather believes it was because Arum only wanted to put Pacquiao in fights in which he held both sides of the equation.

It was no accident, Mayweather's people insist, that when it appeared Mayweather was headed to prison on Jan. 1 that Arum talked about Pacquiao fighting on Cinco de Mayo weekend. But as soon as his sentence was delayed, Pacquiao suddenly was not available until first early June and finally late May.

They also point out that Arum's proposed opponents for Pacquiao – Timothy Bradley, Lamont Peterson, Miguel Cotto or Juan Manuel Marquez – all have ties to Arum while Mayweather obviously does not. At one point Arum even jokingly told the Los Angeles Times that "June 9 is perfect" for a Mayweather fight knowing that was eight days after his sentence was to begin.

Although a funny line, Arum came off as tone deaf to the larger point – which was that no one else seemed to find this thing funny anymore. That is why the wisest move in some time on this matter came on Jan. 18, when Mayweather reached out privately to Pacquiao, calling him directly in the Philippines and suggesting a 50-50 split.

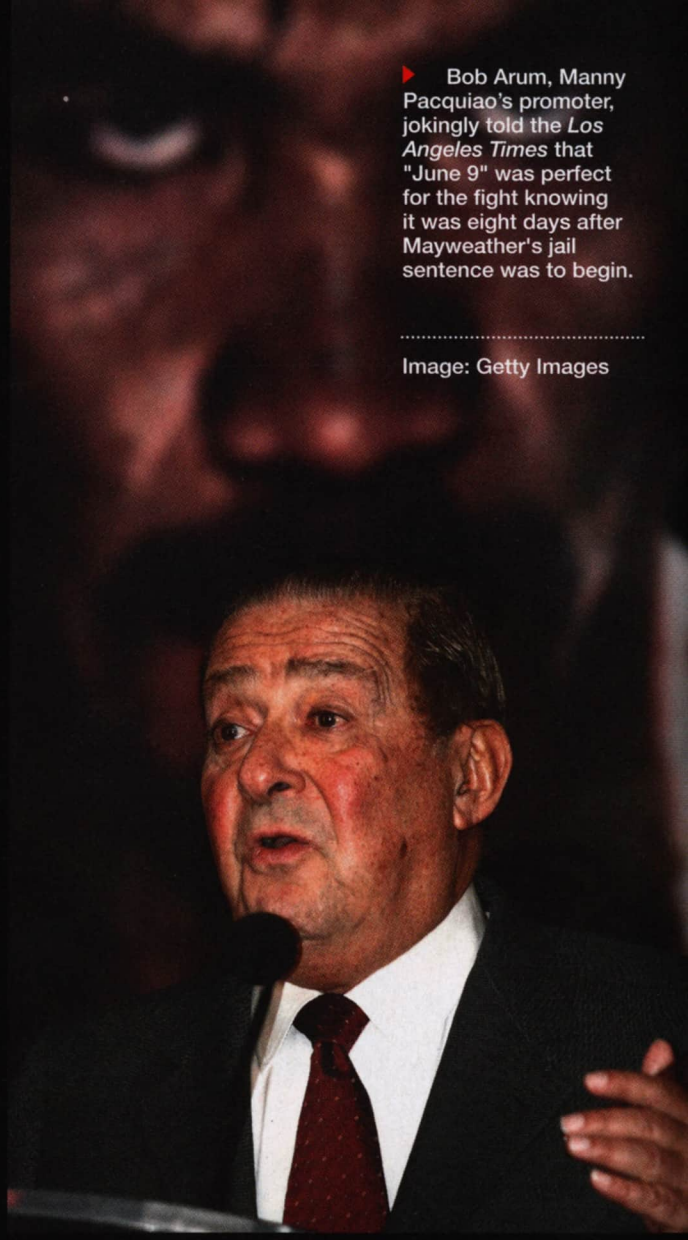
Later that week Mayweather told a media assembly during an event where he donated $100,000 to breast cancer research that, "There is no fight I want more than the Manny Pacquiao fight. I guess he said he agreed to fight. The only thing that is stopping this fight right now, that I truly believe is stopping the fight, is Bob Arum."

Arum later suggested his proposed outdoor arena, financed jointly by Las Vegas casino owners Steve Wynn and Sheldon Adelson, might be ready in time for a May 26 fight but the larger issue was this: If anything went wrong and the fight had to be delayed, Mayweather would begin serving his 87-day sentence and wouldn't be available until late fall. That's a risk. A lot can happen between January and November, especially to a guy like Mayweather.

Arum also suggested on Philippine television's GMA that Mayweather was searching for what he called "outside parties" to guarantee his end of the purse while he will guarantee Pacquiao's yet at the same time Pacquiao was telling GMA "if Mayweather agrees to 50-50 sharing, there will be no problem."

In a fight of this magnitude with so many desperate and highly volatile characters involved there will always be problems. But as Seth Abraham preached for so long, the fight will be made when the fighters order it done. So if you want to blame somebody for how long the first "Fight of the New Millennium" has taken to negotiate forget Arum or Haymon. Don't listen to Koncz or Golden Boy Promotions.

In the end, fights like this get made when the two fighters finally tell their employees, "Make the fight and don't come back until you do." ■



Bob Arum, Manny Pacquiao's promoter, jokingly told the *Los Angeles Times* that "June 9" was perfect for the fight knowing it was eight days after Mayweather's jail sentence was to begin.

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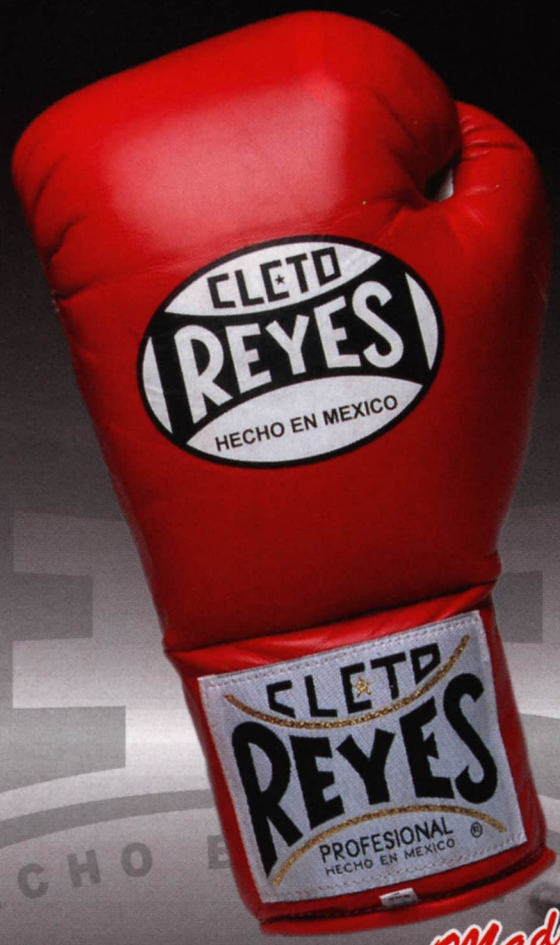

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BEHIND BARS

HOW WILL JAIL TIME AFFECT FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.?

By **Joseph Santoliquito**

The facade of the Clark County Detention Center in Las Vegas looks more like an office building in any downtown metropolis than it does a prison. To outsiders, it was intended to blend in with its surroundings.

Inside, the modern edifice is a glazed-brick village that can hold a maximum of 1,450 inmates, a rabbit warren of winding tunnels used to securely escort prisoners from one building to the other.

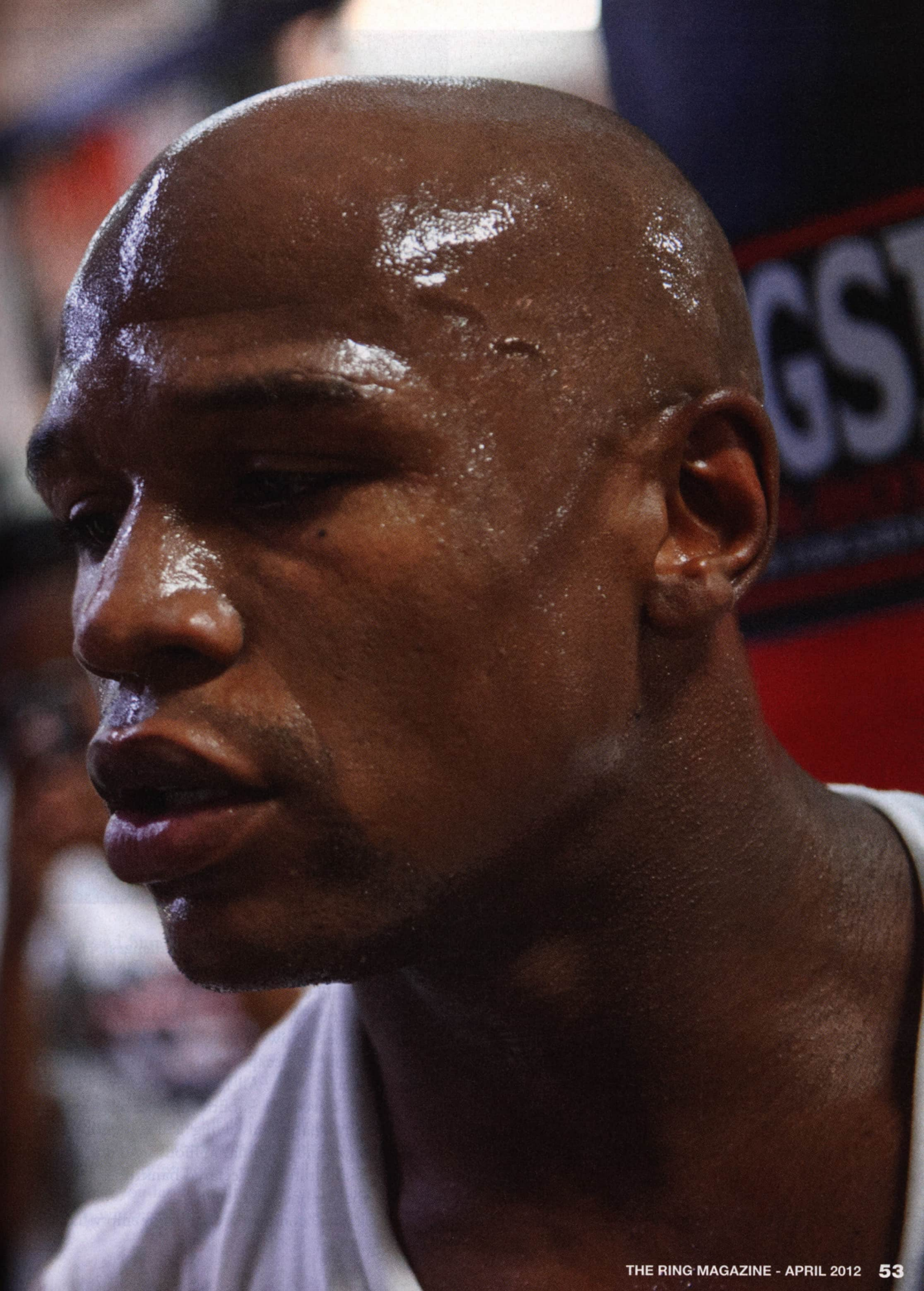
On June 1, Floyd Mayweather Jr. is scheduled to cross from one side to the other for three months. Will he be able to blend in with his surroundings? More importantly, what will happen when his jail sentence for domestic violence ends?

Will "Money" be the same fighter he was before he went in? Will he be the same man?

Some answers might be found in the experiences of other fighters who did prison time during their primes. The list includes former luminaries such as Mike Tyson, Sonny Liston, Johnny Tapia and Tony Ayala Jr., as well as those just entering the limelight, such as James Kirkland.

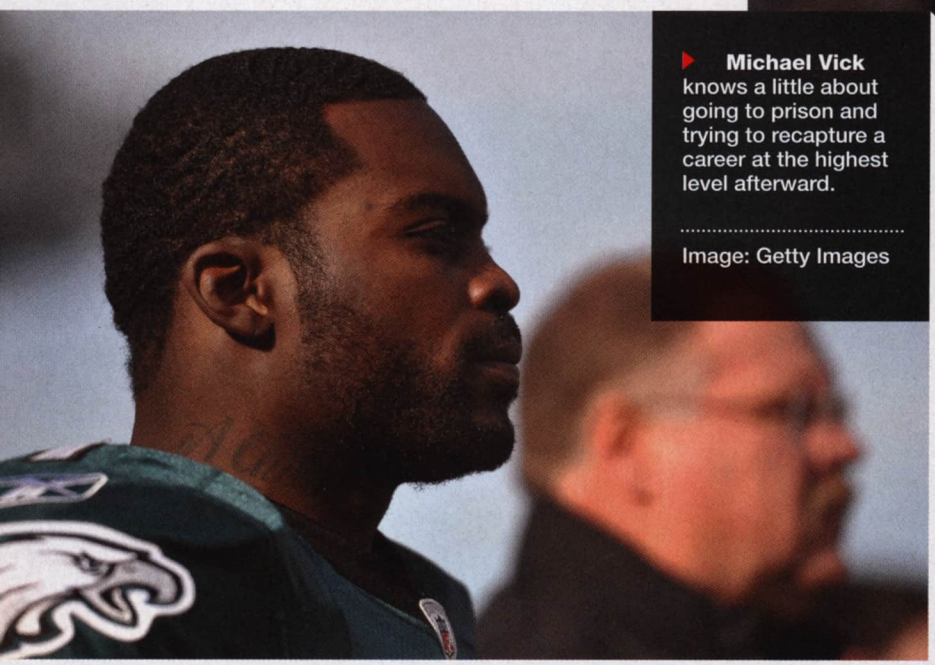
After doing their time, some renewed their careers where they left off and flourished, while others floundered miserably after release. And some lost large portions of their careers because of imprisonment.

Mayweather pleaded guilty on Dec. 21 to a reduced battery domestic violence charge and no-contest to two harassment charges as part of a plea deal that dropped felony and misdemeanor charges that could have sent Mayweather to prison for up to 34 years. The case



centered on an incident with Josie Harris, mother to three of Mayweather's children – two of whom were present and allegedly threatened with beatings – that started as an argument about Harris dating another man and escalated to physical violence.

It's the latest in a list of transgressions, a pattern of behavior that has produced numerous flirtations with prison time for Mayweather. In 2002, he was convicted of misdemeanor battery stemming from a fight with two women at a Las Vegas nightclub. He received a suspended one-year jail sentence and was ordered to undergo impulse-control counseling. In February 2005, in his hometown of Grand Rapids, Mich., he was ordered to perform community service after pleading no contest



Michael Vick knows a little about going to prison and trying to recapture a career at the highest level afterward.

Image: Getty Images

to misdemeanor assault and battery for a bar fight.

Later that year, in July 2005, he was acquitted by a Nevada jury of accusations that he hit and kicked Harris during an argument outside a Las Vegas nightclub. In October 2010, he was acquitted of misdemeanor allegations for threatening two homeowner association security guards during an argument over parking tickets.

He still owes 40 hours of community service to the Las Vegas Habitat for Humanity Project, which came under a South Carolina federal judge's order for dodging a deposition in a music rights lawsuit. According to a statement by Habitat for Humanity official Catherine Barnes back in December 2011, Habitat for Humanity has never heard from Mayweather.

But this will be the first extended lock-up in Mayweather's life. Though it's 90 days, with the possibility he will get out after 60 on good behavior, Mayweather will undergo new challenges. He'll be told when to eat. When to brush his teeth with a tiny toothbrush. Told when to come and go. His life will be altered dramatically, albeit for a brief time.

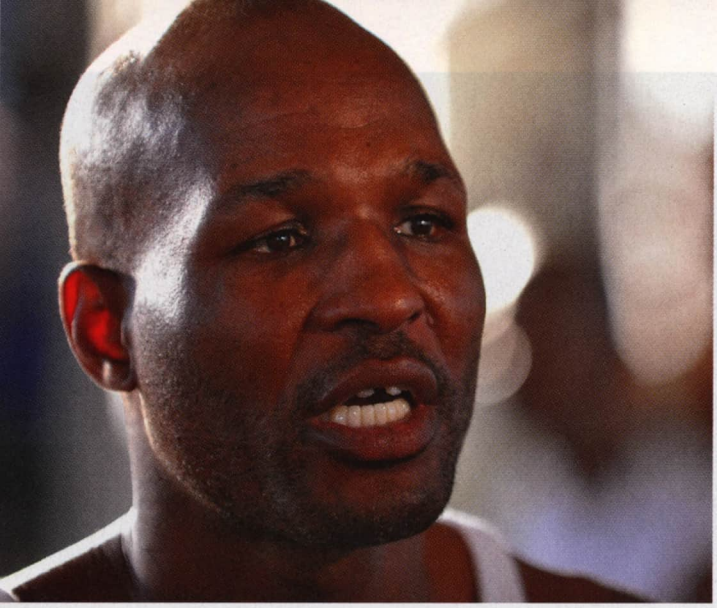
Michael Vick knows a little about going to prison and then trying to recapture a career at the highest level afterward. The All-Pro Philadelphia Eagles' quarterback served 21 months in Leavenworth on federal felony charges involving a dog fighting ring. He saw his job and potential millions in endorsements evaporate and ultimately declared bankruptcy. He lost much of what he once held dear.

But Vick didn't come away completely empty-handed.

"I found humility," he said. "Prison changes you. It makes you more humble, if anything. I remember the first day I walked into prison. I slammed the door, because I knew the bad decisions that I made. It was my poor judgment that put me in here. I allowed that to happen. There's no way of explaining the hurt and the guilt that I had. I realized that I did something wrong. I think that's when the reality hits you.

"Hopefully, it will hit Floyd. I don't know if he'll react the way I reacted, but when it hit me I cried, cried a lot. The reality of prison puts it all into perspective. You realize you let yourself down, your family down, everyone who ever supported you, you let them down. Sleeping on a prison bed, looking out at the world behind bars, that wasn't my life. I knew that. I had to change that. That wasn't the way that things were supposed to be and how my career was supposed to turn out. Funny thing is, I thought, at one time, what I was doing was cool. I thought there wasn't anything I couldn't do. You think you have everything – money, love – from everyone.

"Yes, you can call it entitlement. I was an NFL quarterback, with everything, all these endorsement deals. I thought the world loved me. I thought I could do anything. I really did. It's what star power could do. It was an exciting time. But you know where it got me?



Bernard Hopkins, who spent time in prison, says "Floyd is going to be all right, believe me." Image: **Fightwireimages**

Laying in a prison bed by myself with no one to talk to but me. Yeah, there were times I cried myself to sleep. Prison changes you. It changed me. I hope Floyd comes out of this OK. He's an amazing talent. I learned from the experience. I hope (Floyd) does."

Among boxers, Tyson is probably the most notorious case. His six-year conviction for the rape of Desiree Washington ended after three years in 1995, and Tyson went on to beat Frank Bruno and a frightened Bruce Seldon for the WBC and WBA versions of the heavyweight title, respectively. But after that, he went 5-5, with two no-contests, in the last 12 fights of his pro career.

Like Vick, and like Mayweather, Tyson reached the pinnacle of his profession. He was still a major figure in the sports world, able to attract national mainstream media with the snap of his fingers. His prison spell carved away three prime years in which who-knows-what could have happened. He certainly stunted his comeback from the Buster Douglas defeat, losing consecutive fights to Evander Holyfield after his prison stay.

Then there is Liston. "The Bear" spent nine months in a St. Louis workhouse for assaulting a policeman and stealing his gun. After he was released in 1958, he won his next 19 fights, including a first-round knockout of Albert Westphal that set up Liston's title shot against world champ Floyd Patterson in September 1962.

The most recent high-profile case, Kirkland, appeared to have changed his life. He seemed to be headed toward a junior middleweight title shot in 2009 when he was caught carrying a gun while on probation for an armed robbery conviction from 2003. He served 18 months and was out of boxing for two years, after which he suffered an ignoble setback at the light-hitting hands of Nobuhiro Ishida.

Kirkland has bounced back again, though. He is among the top 154-pound contenders in the world again after stopping Alfredo Angulo in a sensational fight. It now looks likely that he will avoid being another cautionary tale of wasted talent.

"Going to prison is based on losing contact with the world, your family and friends, and you're around all these people that are convicts; it affects your performance and how and where your future goes. It does," Kirkland said. "I don't think Floyd will be challenged in there, fighting-wise. But it will be challenging humble-wise. There are different ways to present yourself in prison, and inmates respect you for that. My whole situation changed me."

Is there a chance we can see a new and improved Mayweather after his stay in the Clark County Detention Center?

"In prison, you lose everything," Kirkland said. "Floyd loves to train, and who knows if they'll take that away from him, mess up his timing and take away the things he always does regularly. I think this will hit him. There are days when you're living the great life and then you hit rock bottom. My whole situation changed me. It made me smarter and made me learn who was really behind me. Floyd may shed a few tears and think that he'll never let this happen to himself again."

Another peer of Mayweather's with experience behind bars reminded us that Mayweather is who he is and that a stint in the same facility that once housed rocker Vince Neil, fellow diva Paris Hilton and dethroned Miss Nevada Katie Rees, isn't exactly Alcatraz.

"Floyd is going to be all right, believe me," said Bernard Hopkins, who served five years for armed robbery in the 1980s. "Money, and I don't mean his nickname, changes a lot of things. He's already had his sentence pushed back. Who knows if he's even going to prison. If he does, Floyd is a celebrity, and they might not even put him in general population. I'll tell you this: He's not going to no [maximum-security] Graterford [Prison] like I did. He's going to a country club."

Still, Hopkins sees an opportunity for Mayweather. "The greatest gift I had in prison, and what Floyd is going to need to learn, is patience," said Hopkins. "When this guy was hanging himself, and that guy was on drugs, and another guy was looking to kill someone, I was plotting and looking ahead at something better, and looking for a better life after I got out. When I went in, I had nothing. Floyd has everything. Money, fame. I don't know Floyd like that, but I think he's going to make it. He's going to need to take his time and look back at himself. He's going to be fine when he gets out. Hopefully, he'll learn something. I did." ■

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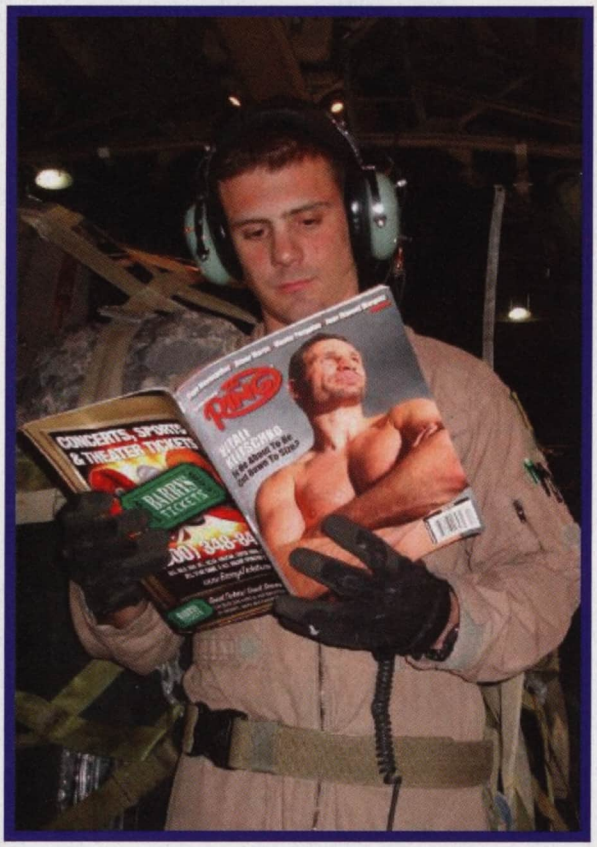

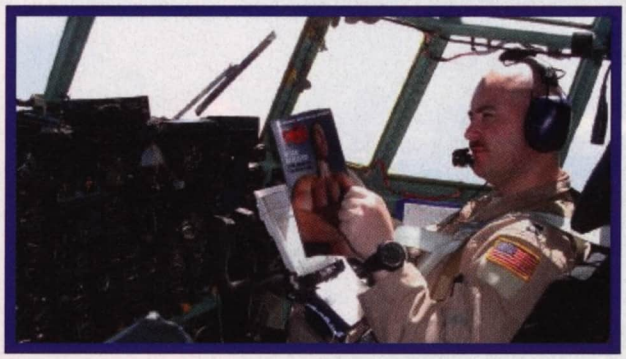

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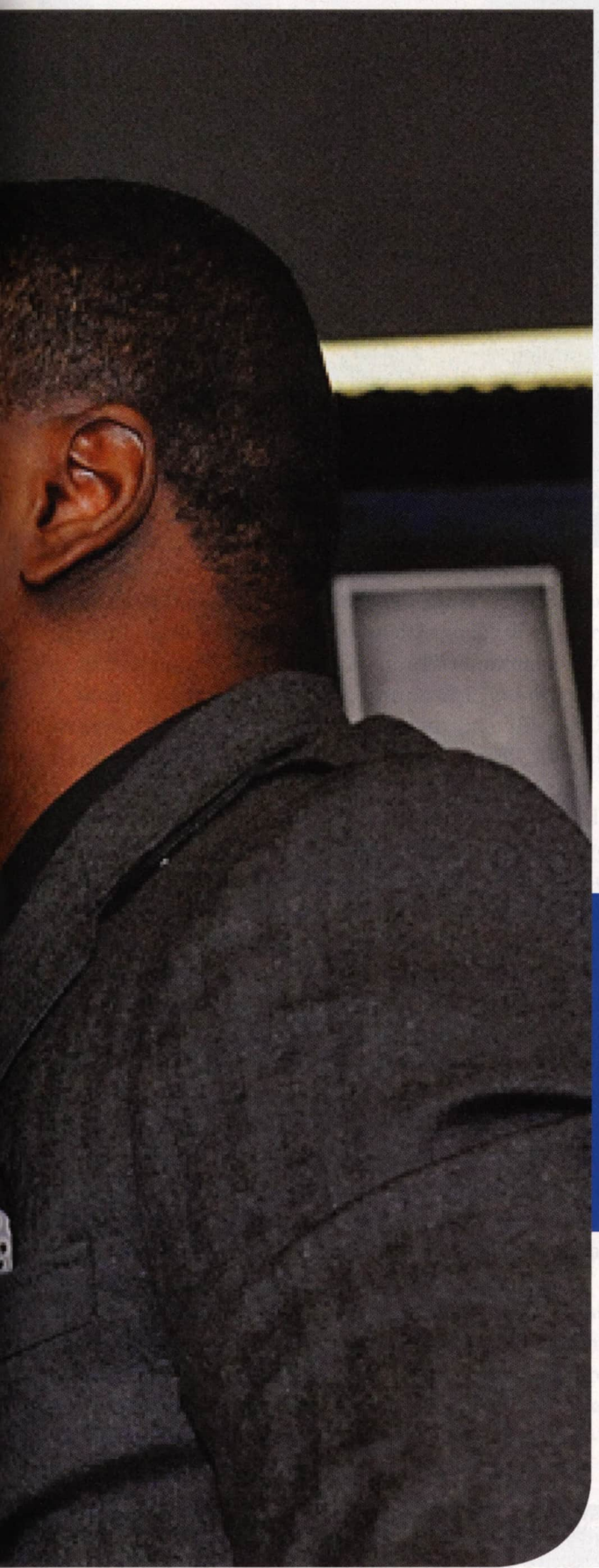
IBF welterweight titleholder Andre Berto (right, with Victor Ortiz) and his trainer have been outspoken supporters of VADA

Image: **Phil McCarten-Hoganphotos**



VADA: THE ROAD TO A CLEAN SPORT

By: **Dr. Margaret Goodman**

A fair fight means competitors have an equal chance to win. For the most part, athletic commissions make an effort to institute fairness. Unfortunately, they don't go far enough. Nothing exemplifies this more than testing for performance-enhancing drugs.

Commissions initiated drug testing decades ago but, until 2001, all profiles were devoid of anabolic steroids and masking agents. Eleven years later, only a handful of jurisdictions require any testing. None include unannounced exams – in which specimens are collected with only one hour's notice – and none test for blood doping and HGH.

I established the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association, or VADA, to change the status quo.

VADA is an independent organization that promotes effective anti-doping programs in boxing and mixed martial arts. We aim to protect the health and safety of athletes who are willing to demonstrate they are free of performance enhancing drugs and methods by volunteering their participation. We wish to educate the athletes, trainers, commissions and public on the hazards of PEDs. Lastly, VADA offers counseling and referral services for those at risk of PED use and addiction.

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Athletes will always seek an edge, but that

VADA: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR WHAT PEDS WILL THE BOXERS BE TESTED?

Our panels will fluctuate, but we will be including urine EPO (erythropoietin), HGH, stimulants, beta-2 agonists, narcotics, anabolic steroids, masking agents, diuretics and carbon isotope ratio (detects shorter-acting steroids). We are also following blood counts and adhere to the 50-percent rule. High blood counts can indicate blood doping.

WHAT IF A BOXER TESTS POSITIVE FOR A PED?

All results (positive and negative) go directly to the athletic commission overseeing the fight and to the Federal Suspension List. They will be dropped from VADA.

HOW MUCH DOES TESTING COST AND WHO PAYS FOR IT?

Testing can cost between $5,000-10,000 per athlete. Paid by donations, or promoters/fighters can pay as part of a business expense.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Any boxer or mixed martial artist who has signed for a scheduled fight.

IF A FIGHTER JOINS VADA, DOES HIS OR HER OPPONENT HAVE TO JOIN?

No. This is a voluntary program.

– Dr. Margaret Goodman

advantage doesn't have to come about through illegal or dangerous methods. It does depend upon athlete education and support. That means offering up-to-date information on the hazards of prohibited substances and supplements, safe training, hydration and weight loss regimens, and enabling the fighters to implement tighter regulations themselves.

"VADA can be a catalyst for cleaning up PEDs in not just boxing, but other combat sports as well," said Ryan Connolly, VADA's chief legal counsel. "With VADA, the athletes need not rely on the powers that be in the sport to implement an effective anti-doping program [which would be a herculean task in a sport like boxing with many different power-wielding commissions, promoters, and executive bodies].

"Through VADA, the athletes can put the power into their own hands by participating in the program on their own accord, independently, and putting themselves in a position to confidently ask their opponents and peers, 'Why aren't you participating, too?'"

Andre Berto and his trainer, Tony Morgan, are to be credited for speaking out in favor of PED testing and for inviting Victor Ortiz to join them in the VADA program for their rematch, which was scheduled for Feb. 11 but postponed after Berto was injured in training.

Berto recently told MaxBoxing.com, "VADA is taking an approach that is moving them to the next level. There are drugs that within 24 hours, they are out of your system. But then again, you are getting the full effect of them, so we are trying to be sure that we get everything cleared across the board. If it's the hematocrit [blood count], we will be able to detect anything."

Boxers and mixed martial artists enroll in VADA six to eight weeks before a scheduled bout and agree to unannounced random blood and urine testing. We use the UCLA anti-doping laboratory headed by Dr. Tony Butch, one of eight labs in the world approved by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). Collection officers are from a respected international company to maintain the chain of custody in specimen transport. Besides urine erythropoietin (EPO), a widely used substance to increase blood count, VADA includes HGH and carbon isotope ratio (CIR) testing.

"CIR is one of the most powerful techniques to detect doping in sport," said VADA Scientific Director Dr. Rodrigo Aguilera, who was instrumental in the test's discovery. "It is the only method so far to differentiate natural from synthetic products that include endogenous [naturally occurring] and exogenous [originating outside] steroids."

Aguilera, who currently works with the WADA-approved lab in Lyon, France, believes that CIR is better than the current technique for detecting testosterone. The traditional method seeks to identify abnormal ratios of testosterone to epitestosterone [T/E ratios], but T/E ratios can be normal even if someone is "juicing." VADA is employing CIR in conjunction with T/E ratios --something that no other sport is doing.

Once confirmed, negative and positive test results are handed over to the commission adjudicating the bout, as well as to Fightfax [the officially appointed record keeper of the Association of Boxing Commissions]. VADA believes it is equally important that clean fighters receive credit for being part of the program. If a test is

Trainer **Tony Morgan** believes "that through VADA's program and through its mission, boxing will be on the path toward being a cleaner sport."
Image: **Fightwireimages**

will be up to the commission to determine sanctions or suspension.

VADA also offers unprecedented support to fighters who are using or are addicted to PEDs. Experienced and respected New Jersey psychiatrist Dr. Ron Kamm has lectured nationally and internationally on sport psychiatry since the 1970s. Along with psychologist Dr. Sharon Kamm, who helps men and women recover from drug and alcohol dependence, both offer referral and counseling services.

Since poor health leads to poor performance, VADA examines more than PEDs. We evaluate electrolytes and kidney and liver functions, which can be negatively affected when a boxer trains and cuts weight. Blood counts are tracked to make certain there is no blood doping. These results also provide the boxer feedback on potential anemia from overtraining.

Everything comes at a price, and testing costs between $5,000-10,000 per athlete, which makes it appear inaccessible to the average boxer. No officer or board member is compensated for their involvement, however. VADA has applied for non-profit status, making donations to the organization tax-deductible, and many participants can join for free. Fighters or promoters can write off the cost as a business expense.

Boxers have no association or league that protects their interests. Fighters fall victim to weak federal laws and the lack of commission uniformity when risking their lives with every fight. But boxers are now the first to step up and volunteer for performance-enhancing-drug testing, and other sports should take notice.

VADA is open to assisting in the expansion of PED testing and education. We hope that amateur and professional athletes, commissions, trainers, promoters and sanctioning bodies will seek our support. Just as VADA gives boxers control over their health, it serves as an example that athletes can improve regulations.

*Please see our website at **www.VADA-testing.org** or contact me at **Margaret@VADA-testing.org**.*

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SWEET SCIENTIST

DOPING GURU VICTOR CONTE FINDS SALVATION IN BOXING

By: **Mark Zeigler**

The poster was on the back of his bedroom door, and every time he closed the door he saw a life-sized Muhammad Ali, body slightly turned, white trunks with a black stripe, white shoes, teeth gritted, bare fists ready to strike. And this quotation underneath:

"I'm so fast, that last night I turned off the light switch in my bedroom and was in bed before the room was dark."

Victor Conte was 13 when Ali fought Sonny Liston the first time. Those were the days of closed-circuit telecasts, and Conte remembers his dad taking him to the Warnors Theater on Fulton Street in downtown Fresno to see it.

"My uncle boxed in the military," says Conte, now 60. "My dad, he was a huge boxing fan. And he just used to love to fight. He would fight all the time when I was a kid – neighbors, anybody. I just thought it was normal. He'd drink a little bit too much, and next thing you knew he and the neighbor would have their jackets off in the front yard.

"Ali, he was my idol the whole time I was growing up. I used to think I was a mini Muhammad Ali."

Not because Conte boxed. He didn't. Still never has put on gloves and thrown a punch.

But because of what Ali stood for, the way he fought, the way he talked, the way he acted, the way he hurled his Olympic medal into the Ohio River. The confidence. The drive. The righteousness. The indignation. The articulation. The swagger.

Conte's elementary school had an annual field day with various events – a 50-yard dash, a 600-yard run, pull-ups – and Conte won the title for fifth grade boys. He came home with the trophy and, just as the man on his bedroom poster would, he brashly told his parents he'd win it again as a sixth grader. His mother was horrified.

"My mother was a very conservative lady," Conte says. "She told me, 'Oh, don't count your chickens before they're hatched. Don't make these predictions.' I kind of had this Cassius Clay/Muhammad Ali thing going on. The fact that he would predict the round and all those things, there was something about that confidence. There was something where I identified with the fact that he could walk the talk, that he could back it up.

"And that shaped me. I became this kid who believed I could do anything, I could overcome anything, I could become anything. That belief system came from Ali. I'd lie in my room with the door closed and stare at that life-sized poster, and dream."

Conte was walking into his bank in Hillsdale, Calif., in May 2010. He remembers seeing a van parked outside, with "Filipino Flash" painted on it.

"I was like, 'Who the hell is that?'" Conte says.

Conte was filling out a deposit slip when the bank manager, a friend of his, said he wanted to introduce him to somebody. Victor, meet boxer Nonito Donaire. The Filipino Flash.

Nonito Donaire (right) is among the big-name fighters who have benefited from the services of Victor Conte. Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

They got to talking and realized Donaire and Conte's daughter trained at the same Bay Area gym with the same strength coach.

They agreed to meet and talk more, and soon Conte was working with Donaire – screening his blood for mineral deficiencies, providing him with nutritional supplements, giving him advice on cutting weight, extolling the virtues of intermittent hypoxic therapy, talking about Ubiquinol and sublingual ATP and tyrosine, explaining why hard sprints are more beneficial than boxing's iconic predawn jogs, cautioning against overtraining, imploring the importance of not just sleep but sleep efficiency.

"The controversial Victor Conte," Donaire wryly calls him.

Says Cameron Dunkin, Donaire's manager: "When Nonito first started working with him, I got some phone calls: 'Watch out. He's a scum bag. He's a bad guy. Be careful he doesn't give you something bad.' I called Nonito. I talked to him about it. But Victor's done a great job with Nonito. He knows what he's doing. It's not hit or miss.

"I've been around a thousand of these bozos. I've seen them nearly kill kids. Victor, he's different. He's not like that. He's legit. ... Everything is scientific."

The sweet scientist.

This is not Conte's first go-round in boxing. He worked with Shane Mosley in 2003, providing him with endurance-boosting erythropoietin (EPO) and several other banned substances before his fight against Oscar De La Hoya. Mosley's trainer at the time, Darryl Hudson, was originally a track guy and learned about Conte's underground doping empire through his track contacts.

Mosley ultimately was outed in the BALCO investigation, and Conte served four months in federal prison and four more under home confinement in 2006. But that was another life for Conte, another time, another persona. First he was a musician, a bassist in R&B band "Tower of Power"

Andre Berto calls Victor Conte's fitness regimen "Conte University." Image: **Fightwireimages**

in the 1970s. Then he was a doping guru, supplying some of the world's greatest athletes with an undetectable cocktail of drugs. Now he's a reformed doping guru who, in his words, is "trying to do the right things for the right reasons." Or so he insists.

"I had a talk with Victor, and he's assured me that he's doing everything on the up and up," promoter Bob Arum said recently. "Given his past history, you have to believe that. He'd have to be really insane to f--- around with all these eyes on him."

Conte also worked with Andre Ward before bumping into the Filipino Flash at the bank, but that, too, was from past connections. Ward's high school track coach was Remi Korchemny, who eventually became part of Conte's BALCO program.

The serendipity of the Donaire encounter, then, represented a new beginning. A second chance. "My comeback," Conte calls it.

His circle of influence has extended to pro boxers Zab Judah, Andre Berto, Karim Mayfield, Brandon Gonzalez and a few others in trainer Virgil Hunter's stable; female boxer Carina Moreno; U.S. amateur women's champion and U.S. Olympic hopeful Marlen Esparza; and MMA's Kyle Kingsbury. The list could be longer, but that's his choice.

Conte is admittedly highly selective, turning down some of the sport's biggest names because he suspects they use banned substances. He doesn't want to take any chances soiling an image he so painstakingly has laundered. He consults his extensive contacts. He also requires everyone to undergo a comprehensive metabolic blood profile, and from that he can identify certain markers – reduced HDL cholesterol, or maybe elevated liver enzymes – that suggest certain types of doping.

"I'm so grateful to have a second chance," Conte says. "Why would I do anything to screw it up? I don't think there would be a third chance."

The cynicism, the skepticism, the whispers still swirl around him, though. Maybe not with the same fervor as they used to, but they're still there under the surface.

The controversial Victor Conte.

"It's the American way," says Tony Morgan, Berto's trainer. "Everyone talks about what they don't know. Don't get me wrong. When I first met him, it was on my mind. Believe me, I really did my homework before we went with him. But once you get to know him, you just know. He doesn't hide anything. He gives it to you straight. He doesn't claim to be something else. What he knows, he

knows very well – very, very well.

"I think Victor is going to be around for a while in boxing. He paid his dues. He did his time. People can say whatever they want. It's their prerogative. Whatever they want to believe, they can believe. But I chose to go with Vic. I trust Vic."

Brandon Rios failed to make weight for his 135-pound fight against John Murray last December in New York.

"I didn't know what to do," says Dunkin, who also advises Rios. "He looked like death. He was sick. He was still overweight. He could barely walk. It was bad."

His first call: the man on the opposite coast with the thin mustache.

"He told me exactly what to do," Dunkin says. "Brandon did it and he recovered like Victor said he would. When we were on the bus coming back from the weigh-in, Brandon said to me, 'I don't know what you gave me, but I feel great.' That's Conte."

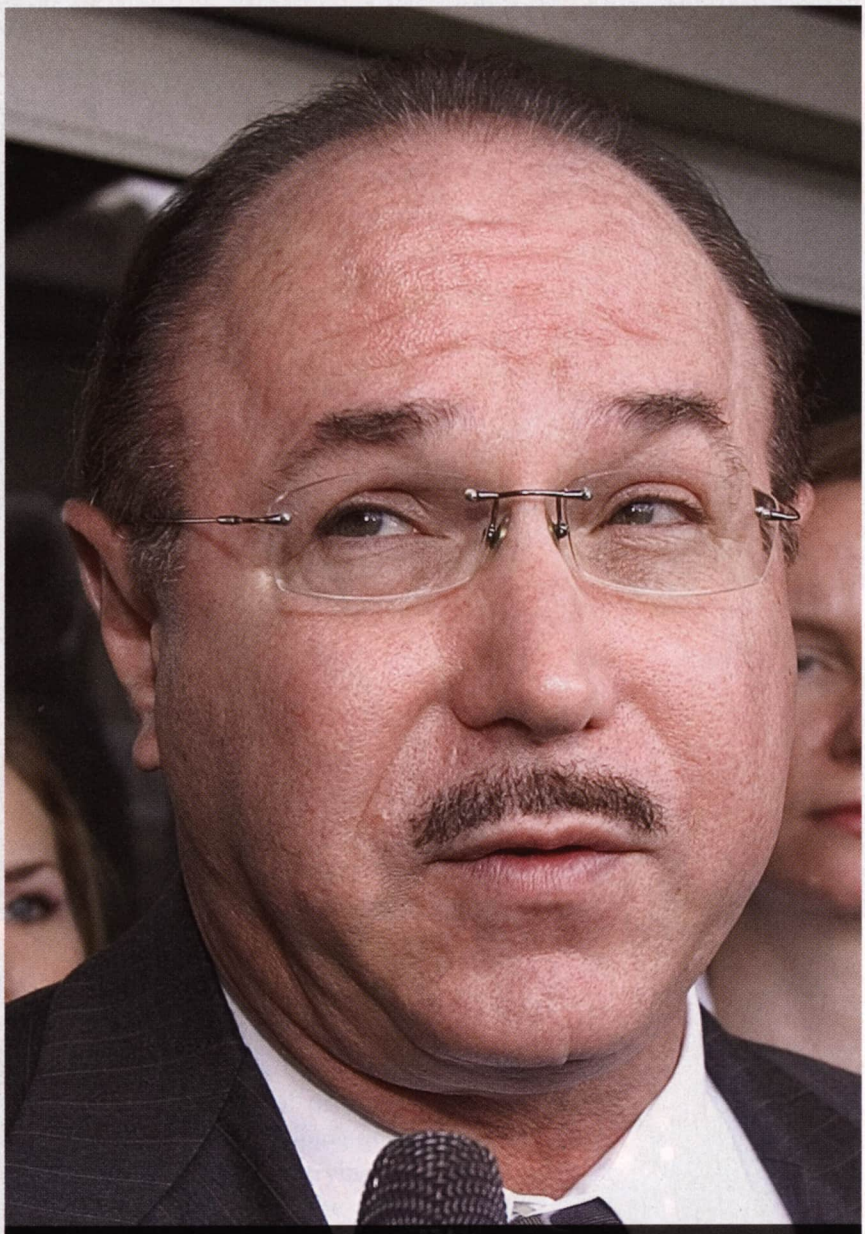
Morgan raves about Conte's weight-trimming methods as well, whatever they are.

"I thought I knew every secret there was in cutting weight, from the saunas, from drink prune juice," Morgan says. "I've even heard that you should stick an ice cube in your butt. How we cut the weight, I'm not going to say, because it's our trade secret now. But it's great. We don't train or anything. We lose weight by relaxing. Take it right off, put it back on. ... Victor is just way ahead of the game."

Conte's regimen – Berto calls it "Conte University" – is multifaceted and individualized. He analyzes blood to identify mineral deficiencies. He counsels his athletes on what to eat, and when. He sends them to Korchemny, the 81-year-old track coach from Russia, for interval sprint workouts. He advises them

The great irony is that Conte professes to be clean in a profession he has branded among the dirtiest in sports.

Image: **Getty Images**



Victor Conte said "I'm so grateful to have a second chance. Image: **Getty Images**

on when enough is enough in the gym, and how to get better sleep.

He has them wear "memory belts" when they train that collect seven physiological parameters, including maximum heart rate, breath frequency, caloric expenditure. He projects the results on a screen in his conference room and discusses them, analyzes them, calculates the amount of recovery necessary to repair the metabolic damage from each workout.

There's also intermittent hypoxic training, where an athlete breathes rarified air through a mask for an hour each day to increase the body's concentration of endurance-boosting red blood cells. The traditional method was to train in the mountains, where the air is thinner, or to sleep in altitude simulation tents. But Conte reasons that sleeping in higher elevations or its equivalent can do more harm than good because the body doesn't get deep enough sleep breathing the oxygen-depleted air.

"New school training," Conte says. "All you have to do is study up on it and read up on it, and the science tells you what to do. I'm not just making this stuff up."

The great irony, of course, is that Conte professes to be clean in a profession he has branded among the dirtiest in sports, right up there with cycling and weightlifting. The Ali in him has never allowed him to swallow his words, to tell it like it isn't, and he has been unrepentant in his criticism.

The use of illicit performance-enhancing drugs in boxing? "Rampant."

Its testing programs? "An IQ test, because you're an idiot if you fail one."

It is such candor that might be Conte's ultimate legacy in the sport, greater than hypoxic breathing masks or innovative weight-cutting techniques or new-age mineral supplementation. In an underworld of shadows and whispers and nods, Conte is standing on the mountaintop, shouting.

"Nobody would talk to me about doping," says Dr. Margaret Goodman, the longtime ringside physician in Nevada. "I was writing an article about PEDs, and someone told me that you don't know anything until you talk to Victor Conte. And Victor talked to me. I wouldn't know half the things I do about performance-enhancing drugs if I hadn't talked to him.

"Yes, he has learned a lesson. But he is somebody who understands the problem. If you can't listen to someone like that, you're really doing the athletes a disservice. People just get so afraid of listening to people. I don't know why. He is not the enemy."

Goodman recently launched the Voluntary Anti-Doping Agency, or VADA, a comprehensive testing program that debuts with Berto's Feb. 11 fight in Las Vegas against

Cameron Dunkin, the manager of **Brandon Rios**, said Rios fought **John Murray** at full strength because of Victor Conte's advice.

Image: **Getty Images**

Victor Ortiz. It is her baby, but she credits Conte with suggesting it and "talking me through how to do it."

Conte has since distanced himself from VADA, choosing instead to work with fighters who will be subject to its rigid urine and blood tests – and the penalties for failing them. The field is being leveled. Now he wants to play ball.

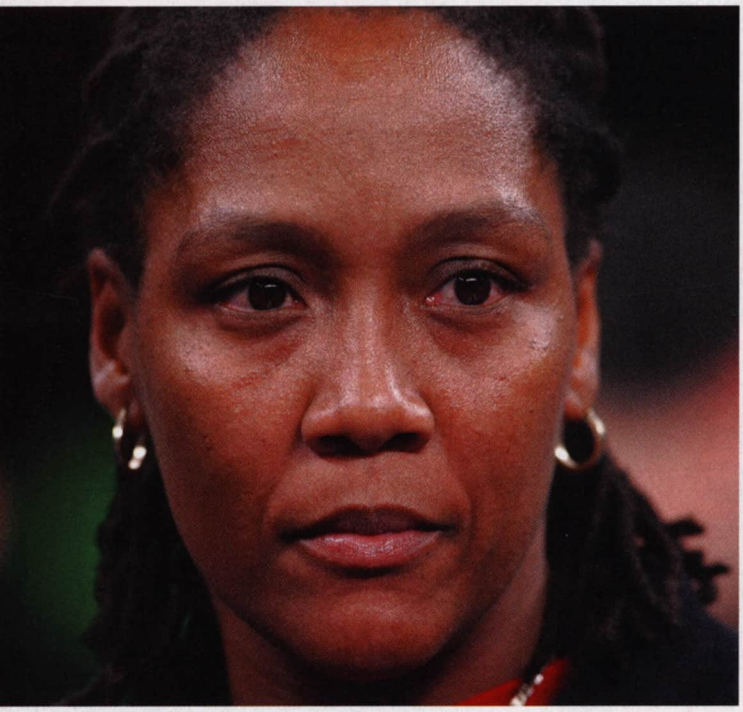
Conte doesn't charge his athletes. Never has. That shocked Morgan, who has tried repeatedly to compensate him.

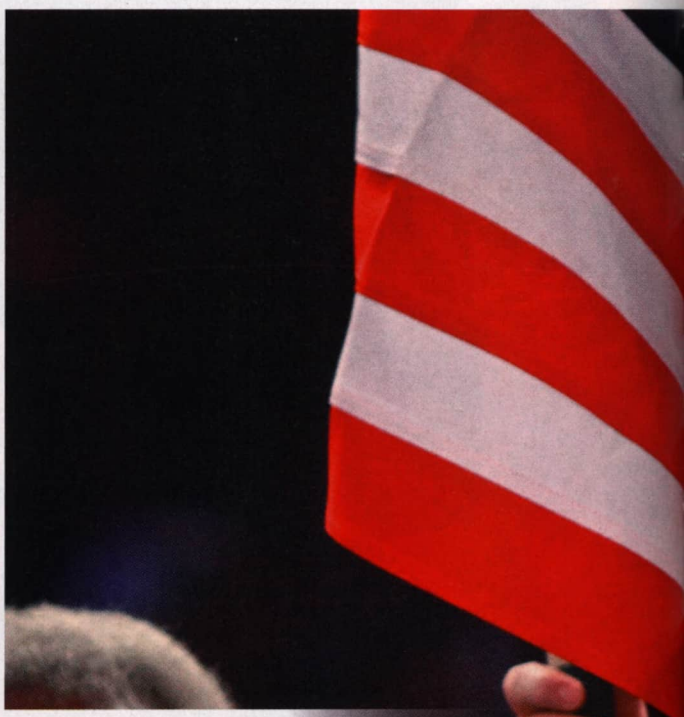
Says Morgan: "He told me, 'Listen, Tony, I do it because I love it. I've made my money.'"

Goodman sees something else at work, a special connection, a sense of responsibility, a salvation.

"I think he really cares," she says. "He cares about these kids and about the sport. There's something about boxers. I think it's because so many of them want a father figure. They were the best patients I ever had. I see that transformation in Victor as he falls in love with these fighters.

"I've seen him transform." ■

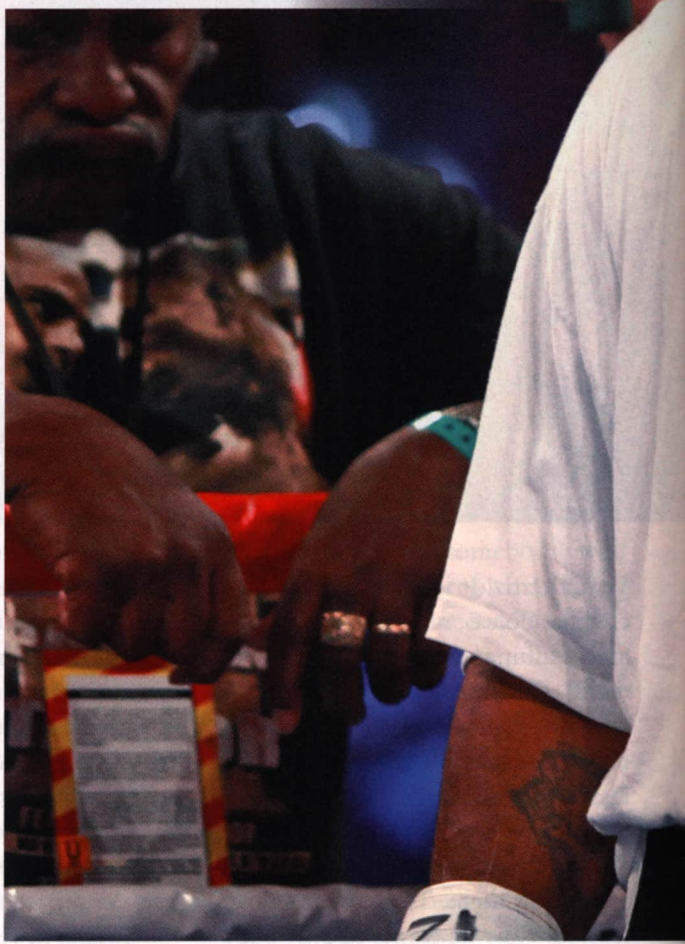




RAW MATERIAL

ANN WOLFE TURNED THE LESSONS OF A HARD LIFE INTO ONE OF BOXING'S MOST EFFECTIVE TRAINING STYLES

By: **Joseph Santoliquito**

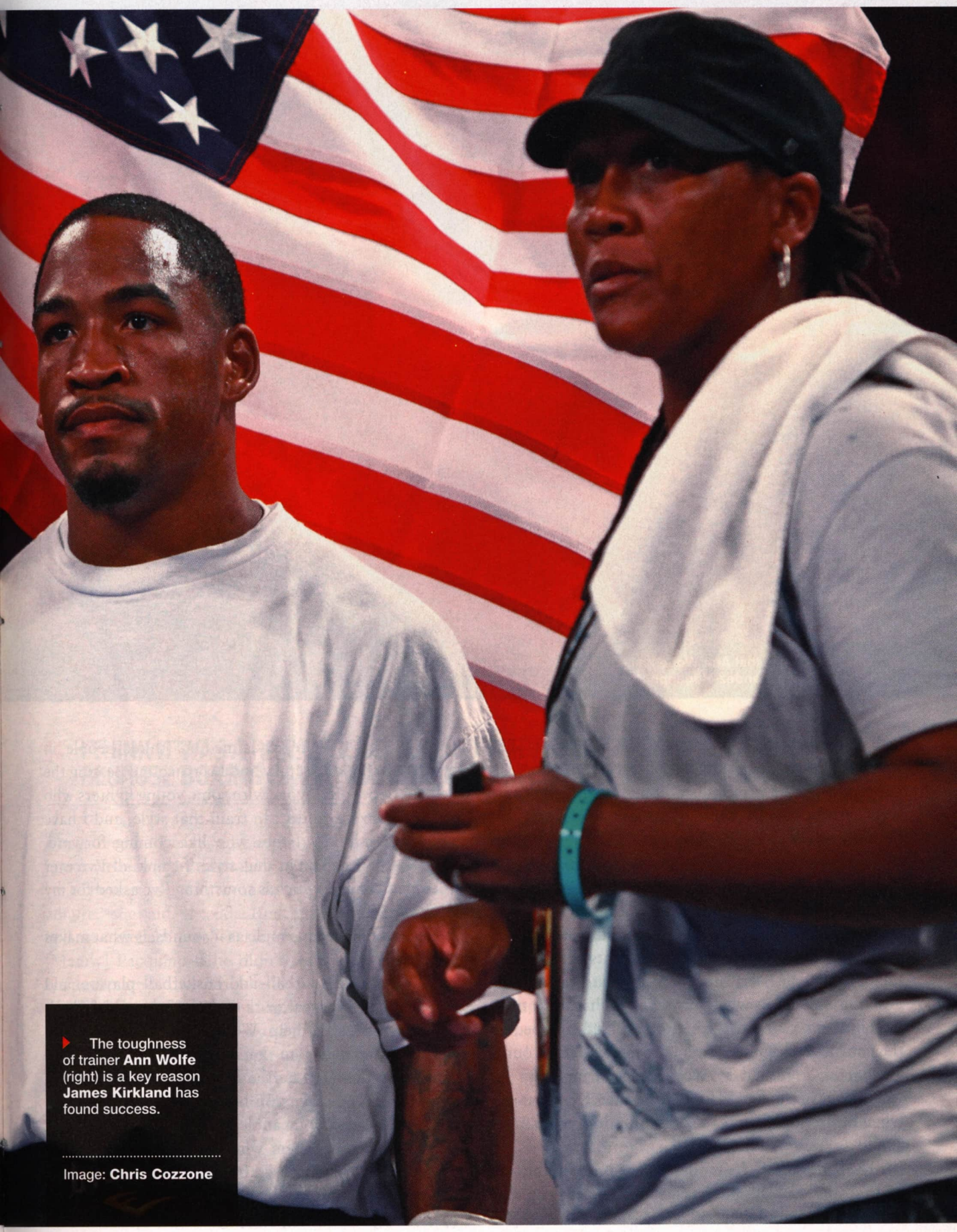


It's easy to understand Ann Wolfe's tenacity. When the first 12 years of your life were spent in a dilapidated old barn that resembled a sharecropper's shack from the 1800s, you tend to hold on tightly to whatever you can get.

Wolfe recalls once as a child getting up in the middle of one winter night and putting on a heavy coat and boots as if preparing for a journey. Her mother asked her where she was going. Ann told her the kitchen. Their dwelling had no heat or indoor plumbing. Each night the large family huddled together on the floor to keep warm while they slept.

Wolfe has a sixth-grade education, something she doesn't hide. She taught herself to spell and read off street signs rural Louisiana where she was raised. She was given nothing. She asked for nothing.

Years later, Wolfe's growing stature as a trainer has confounded the boxing cognoscenti, representing a direct challenge to the traditional notion that a woman can't train men to fight. But the doubters would do



The toughness of trainer **Ann Wolfe** (right) is a key reason **James Kirkland** has found success.

Image: **Chris Cozzone**

One might argue that **Ann Wolfe** came of age as a trainer the day **James Kirkland** knocked out **Alfredo Angulo**. Image: **Roberto Fernandez-Hoganphotos**

well to understand her past. Wolfe is a rarity. She's unconventional. She's fought to be an original her entire life, setting standards no one thought she could reach. According to Wolfe and those who know her best, she won't stop. She never has.

Beyond those words, though, the testament to her strength can be found in one person: James Kirkland.

There was a brief time in early 2011 when junior middleweight contender left Wolfe for established trainer Kenny Adams. Three fights into their relationship, he was matched against journeyman Nobuhiro Ishida in what was tabbed a harmless tune-up. Some tune-up. It ended with Kirkland slumped on the canvas less than two minutes into the first round. He quickly returned to Wolfe, sans an apology for leaving her in the first place, and resurrected his career when he defied long odds to stop Alfredo Angulo in six rounds last November.

The Kirkland-Wolfe re-marriage was one of the feel-good stories of 2011. But has it steered other fighters in her direction?

"Hell no!" Wolfe exclaimed. "I think people in boxing all think I'm crazy and I run around beating the hell out of people. I work with some young fighters who are slick boxers, and I can train that style, and I have some who are like James who like coming forward, and I know I can train that style. I think all I've ever asked is a chance, which is something I've asked for my whole life.

Her whole life, as simple as it sounds, is what makes her different.

"I've trained football and basketball players, and they find out what real work is about," she said. "That's where I think I can help. When someone wants to be trained by me, they're coming across someone who cares deep down to be the best they can be to bring out your best. I make you believe in things you don't believe you think you can do."

Fighters and trainers who don't put the time and commitment into their craft drive Wolfe crazy. She's greatly impressed by Andre Ward's trainer, Virgil Hunter, by one of the contemporary greats and new Hall of

"I THINK IT WAS A REALLY GOOD YEAR FOR ME. I HOPE IT GETS BETTER, BECAUSE BOXING SAVED MY LIFE. I LOVE IT LIKE IT WAS MY OWN PARENT."

Famer Freddie Roach, and by Barry Hunter, trainer of junior welterweight titleholder Lamont Peterson.

"Those guys get it, those are the types I look at and admire," she said. "Freddie Roach is an excellent coach and an excellent teacher. He would walk away from [Manny] Pacquiao if he didn't train and work hard. He understands that. Freddie Roach is one of the guys out there that will tell you in sparring, he wants you to knock Pacquiao on his ass and challenge him. That's what I look at. A lot of people underestimated me as a coach. They thought James Kirkland was going to be James Kirkland regardless. That was proven when he left. Manny Pacquiao is not Manny Pacquiao without Freddie Roach – point blank, no questions asked."

"When James Kirkland got back, he understood it was time to get back. I think it was a really good year for me. I hope it gets better, because boxing saved my life. I love it like it was my own parent."

It was in 1995 that Wolfe, out on the streets at the time with little trust or support from anyone, wandered into Pops Billingsley's gym in East Austin, Texas, and asked him if he could teach her how to box.

Billingsley recalls the first time he ever met Ann. She was standoffish, she wore a sideways glare that screamed "get the hell away from me or I'll punch you in the face." Wolfe had some unthinkable experiences as a little girl with men, Billingsley revealed, but he's seen her evolve into what she's become today – a qualified, respected trainer.

"When it comes to coaching, there aren't too many males than can top Ann today," Billingsley said. "She can do the training thing, the coaching thing, and the managing thing. If it wasn't for Ann, there would be no James Kirkland. Ann, at first, didn't think she could

work with James. It turns out she's a better coach than I ever was. The things she does for him is amazing. She got him good sparring. She raised his energy level. With an opportunity, Ann can be one of the best trainers the world has ever seen. I've seen her coach and I've seen how she works with the fighters. Ann is not one-dimensional. She can train, and then she can work with a fighter and train him for what to eat, and help a fighter through weight training and sprint training.

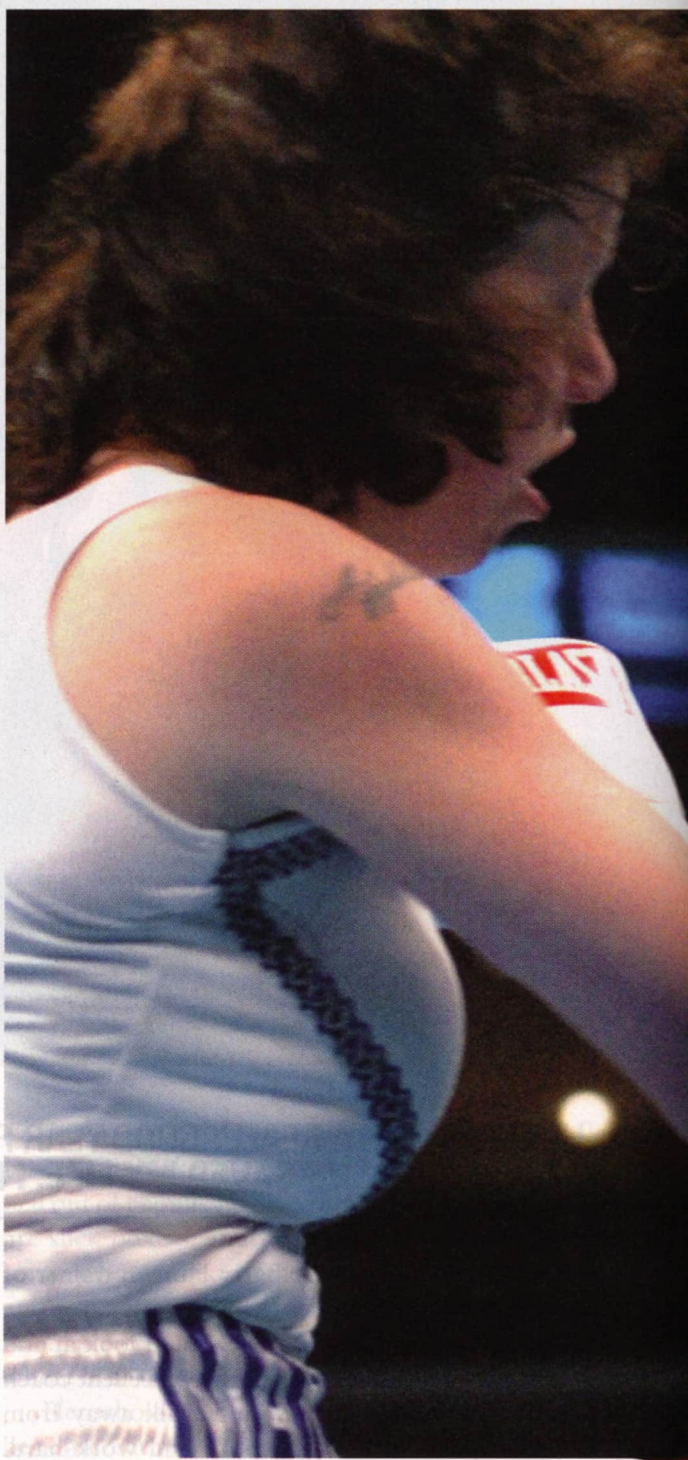
"I'm hoping Ann gets an opportunity to train more fighters. With Ann, she's good when the odds are against her."

Working with Billingsley helped ease Ann's considerable edge toward men and created the foundation for her own future success as a fighter, but there were still significant obstacles to overcome.

Wolfe was living with her two daughters, who were children then, sleeping under a boat in a trailer complex with just a blanket between them when she met another woman who wanted to learn how to box. The woman, Linda, turned out to be the wife of Brian Pardo, who owns a controlling interest in Life Partners, a company that deals in the secondary life insurance market in Waco, Texas. It was with Pardo's help that Ann was able to eventually purchase her own gym, finding some semblance of economic stability for the first time in her life. Slowly she began to trust people.

"This is a nice transition for Ann," Pardo said. "After her (boxing) career, when Ann was thinking about what she should do, she spoke about training. She's put together a great gym. She's keeping the kids in the gym serious. I just love her to death. I love her guts and willingness to train like Pops wanted her to. She's truly an extraordinary person. The more you interact with her, the more you see she's truly a champion. She's seen the depths of poverty and she made up her mind that she wasn't going back there. This isn't about boxing, but an extraordinary person. She's one of the good things in my life that I'll never forget."

Back at her gym, Wolfe finds herself the mother of more than just her daughters, Jennifer and Latania, and 3½-year old son Zion. She's like a surrogate den mother to teenagers who are much like she was, with little hope and little help. She's teaching life lessons, basic things like the importance of ironing clothes and looking presentable in public. During the Christmas holidays, Ann was standing in line at a grocery store when a Mexican woman in front of her had her credit card denied. Wolfe gathered the belongings of the woman, someone she never met before, and had the cashier put the charges on her card. She seems to take great pleasure in helping people, the sword she once held in her strong hands a thing of the past.



After ensuring so many challenges, Wolfe feels she can handle anything.

"I hold my head up today the same way I did when I was living in a car," Wolfe said. "Money is a mother------ and it won't always last. I almost lost my damned house when James went to jail. But I've been through it before. I can deal with it. I'd rather have no money and doing what I do – working and helping these kids – than anything else right now. I want to give to other people what Pops and Brian Pardo did for me." ■

Ann Wolfe was a tough fighter before she became a tough trainer.

Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

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Ann Wolfe was a tough fighter before she became a tough trainer.

Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

POWER OUTAGE

A VARIETY OF FACTORS ARE CONSPIRING TO LIMIT SINGLE-SHOT KNOCKOUT ARTISTS TODAY

By: **Don Stradley**

Flat Statement: Fighters don't know how to punch anymore.

Now, before we start getting angry letters from the Brandon Rios Fan Club, consider how many dull decisions you've had to sit through in recent years. Look at the anemic knockout ratios of some of our top rated fighters. When we do see a devastating knockout, it feels freakishly out of the ordinary.

There are theories. For instance, many of history's great punchers were heavyweights. As the heavyweight division enters the second decade of a dry spell, we can forget about seeing another Joe Louis anytime soon. (Hell, right now we'd settle for another Mike Weaver.) Other theories include …

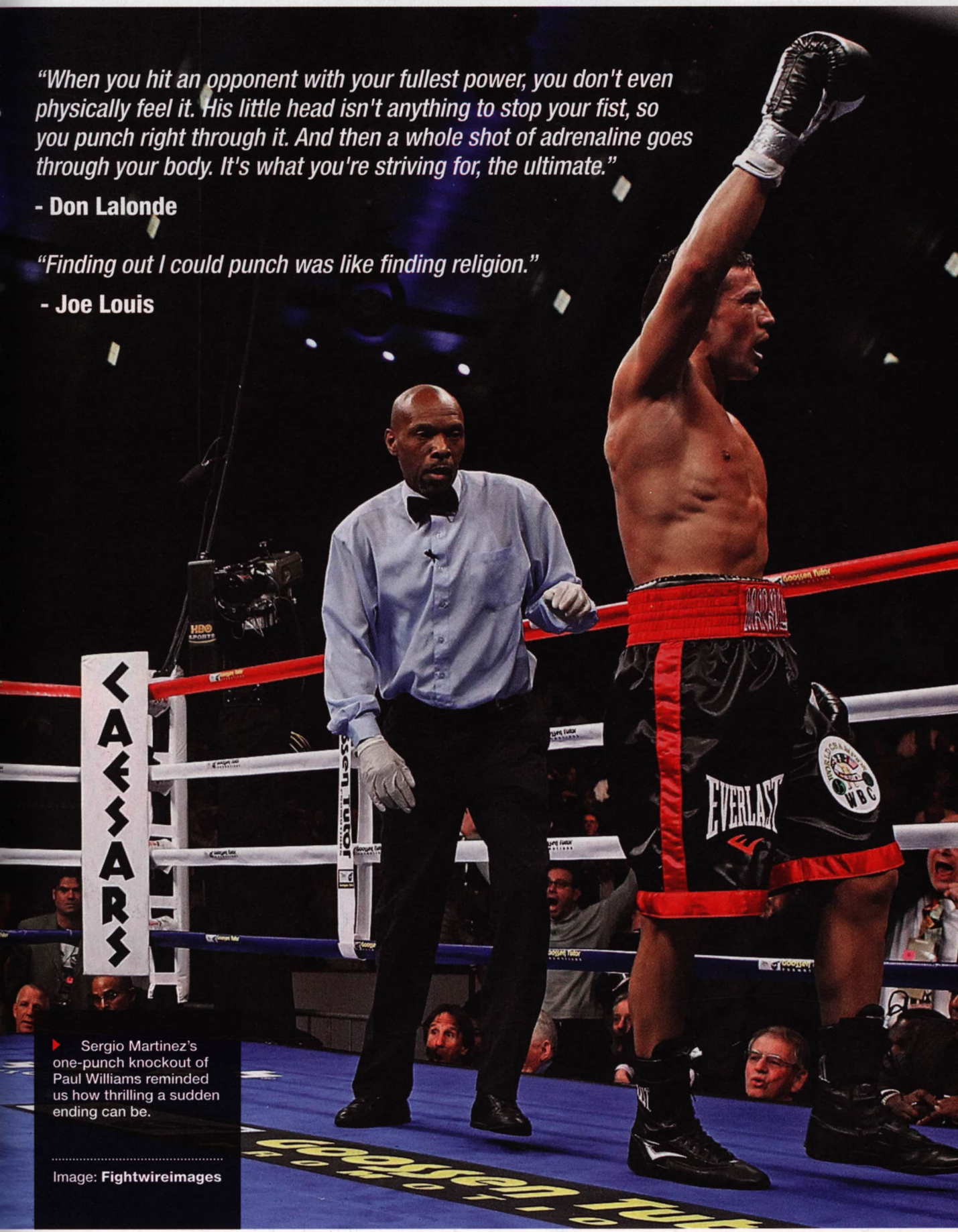
Fighters jump weight classes

"When you hit an opponent with your fullest power, you don't even physically feel it. His little head isn't anything to stop your fist, so you punch right through it. And then a whole shot of adrenaline goes through your body. It's what you're striving for, the ultimate."

- Don Lalonde

"Finding out I could punch was like finding religion."

- Joe Louis



Sergio Martinez's one-punch knockout of Paul Williams reminded us how thrilling a sudden ending can be.

Image: **Fightwireimages**

Wladimir Klitschko (right) takes his time going in for the kill but very often ends fights in a particularly violent manner.

Image: **Ed Mulholland-Fightwireimages**

more frequently than in the past, and they aren't bringing their punches with them.

Perhaps because boxing's health hazards have become more publicized, fighters have become more defensive. You can't swing like Rocky Marciano when you're covering your head.

Fighters from different parts of the world are coming into prominence, and driving a man's nose into his brain doesn't play as well in Finland as it does here.

Simply put, the real gunslingers of boxing – the single-shot knockout punchers – are vanishing more quickly than the Bengal tiger.

In an effort to further explain boxing's current power outage, THE RING consulted three respected trainers on the subject: Joe Goossen, Emanuel Steward, and Harold Knight.

They assured us we were not imagining things.

"The de-evolution of punching can be traced to the revamped amateur system, where 10 pitter-pat punches are worth more than a knockdown," said Goossen, who has worked with such punchers as Diego Corrales and the Ruelas brothers.

According to Goossen, an alarming number of young fighters come out of the amateur ranks not knowing how to punch.

"They don't turn the knuckles," Goossen said. "There is a spin technique to punching. They don't know how to put the blade of the axe to work. They also don't know how to read the body language of an opponent, to know when he might be ready to go. There is less of a problem with fighters from Mexico, because they turn professional early, and they think like professionals.

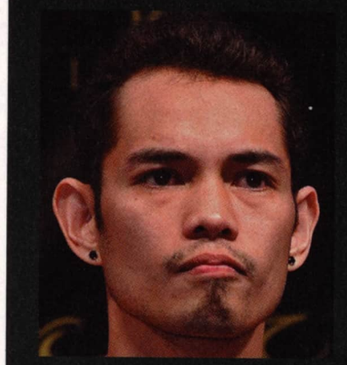
"But the European influence,

PACKING POWER

THE TOP **ONE-PUNCH** KNOCKOUT ARTISTS TODAY

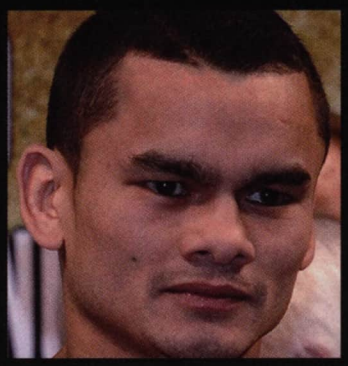
By: **Don Stradley**

Today's punchers might not rate with the all-time greats, but there are some who can certainly smack 'em out. Below are THE RING's Top 10 knockout punchers.



1. NONITO DONAIRE

RECORD: 27-1 (18 KOs)
KO PERCENTAGE: 64.29
TOP KOS: Vic Darchinyan TKO 5, 2007; Fernando Montiel TKO 2, 2011.
THE FACTS: Does his best work with a masterful left hook ... Has KO'd nine of his last 11 opponents ... Is so confidant in his punch that he occasionally dabbles as a southpaw, switching his stance during fights ... Scored 10 of his 18 career knockouts in the first three rounds ... One-punch whack-out of Darchinyan was THE RING's Knockout of the Year ... Was on a four fight knockout streak before meeting the reluctant Omar Narvaez last October.



2. MARCOS MAIDANA

RECORD: 31-2 (28 KOs)

KO PERCENTAGE: 84.85

TOP KOS: Victor Ortiz TKO 6, 2009; Victor Cayo KO 6, 2010 (body shot).

THE FACTS: Is the epitome of the heavy-handed slugger who has the utmost faith in his punch ... Achieved 24 of his 28 career knockouts in the first four rounds, including 10 in the opening frame ... Came within one or two punches of stopping Amir Khan in their unforgettable 2010 bout ... If you need more proof of his gunslinger status, consider that he has a gun tattooed on his torso.

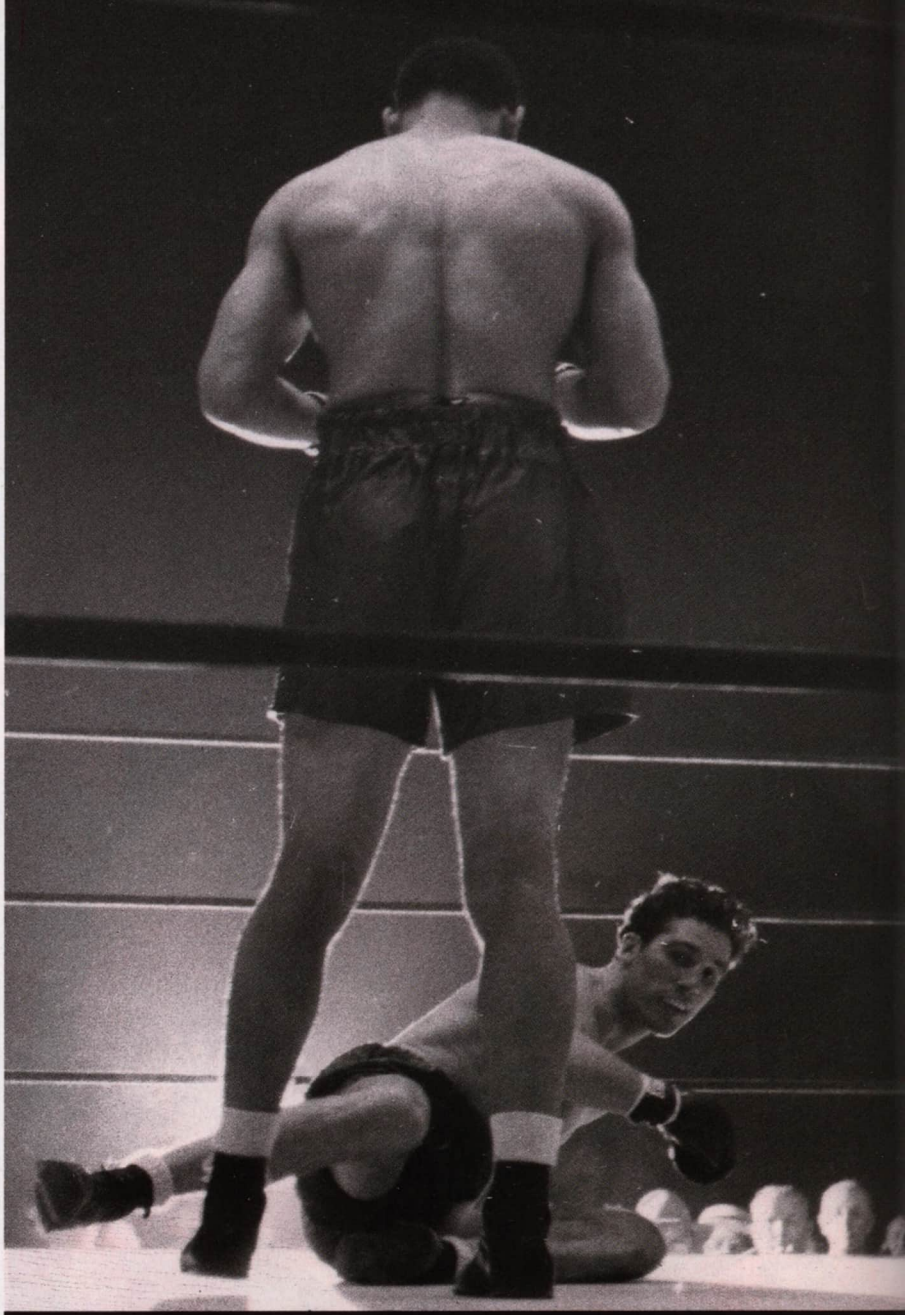
3. JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ

RECORD: 31-1 (28 KOs)

KO PERCENTAGE: 87.5

TOP KOS: Bernabe Concepcion TKO 2, 2010; Sergio Medina TKO 1, 2008; Daniel Ponce de Leon TKO 1, 2008.

THE FACTS: Is perhaps the closest this era has to a pure gunslinger, and he can shoot with either hand ... Carries on the tradition of Puerto Rican knockout artists such as Felix Trinidad and Wilfredo Gomez ... Won his first nine bouts by stoppage, six in the first round ... Embarrassed Medina to the point where Medina claimed he took a dive, but later recanted his story.



One reason **Joe Louis** (here standing over victim **Billy Conn**) punched so hard might be that he didn't baby his hands during training, as fighters seem to do today. Image: **THE RING**

and the melding of styles and rules, plus the reliance on punch stats, has corroded amateur boxing. The safety-first mindset has turned amateur boxing sterile. But boxing is never going to be a safe sport, and the amateur system has done a disservice to fighters who want to make a career of it. It's as if the baseball farm system played an entirely different game than the MLB, where bunting was favored over home runs. That's how bad amateur boxing has become."

Of course, it wasn't always this way. Goossen points to AAU boxing in the 1960s and '70s, when amateurs fought with pro gloves, no head gear and professional rules.

"The AAU style produced guys who are in the history books," said Goossen. "When I see amateurs now, it's horrendous, it's disturbing. They have no left hand, and they're all over the ring. But there was a time, let me tell you,

when amateurs were so good that Aileen Eaton, the promoter at the old L.A. Olympic Auditorium, would bring amateurs to fight on the undercards of her professional shows just to get the crowd excited. The AAU and the California commission worked hand in hand, and the transition from amateur to professional was fantastic."

Emanuel Steward agrees that modern amateur boxing has ruined an era of punchers, but mentioned other causes, such as ill-fitting gloves and bad training habits.

"You can't make a solid fist in some of these new foam gloves," said Steward. However, not even a return to horse-hair gloves could solve what Steward sees as the biggest detriment to punching – the popularity of rhythmic pad drills.

"I introduced the pads," Steward told THE RING, chuckling at the irony. "But when my guys hit the pads, my entire body would shudder. I'd tell guys to rip a left hook to the body, and then come up with right hands. Now, the fighter just goes pop pop pop. They put on a show, but they aren't learning to hit with full power."

But these young fighters grew up watching Mike Tyson and Lennox Lewis smash men to the canvas with brutal uppercuts and right crosses. Don't they want to emulate the great punchers of the recent past?

"You'd be surprised," Steward said. "They'll see some unknown trainer, who can't tape hands or anything, but they'll see him working the pads with some guy going pop pop pop, and they'll say, 'I want him as my trainer.' It's like they're hypnotized. I don't know what it is. It's frustrating. The trainer is meeting the punch halfway, and the fighter isn't committing. They're slapping each other."

Goossen also mentioned the troubling trend of fighters babying their hands.

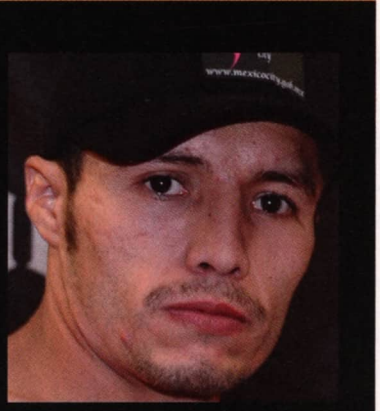
"Young amateurs, and most of the pros now, are using big boxing gloves to hit heavy bags," Goossen said. "Their hands are wrapped in double wraps, with an inch and a half of padding on the knuckles, in 16-ounce gloves. They do that for eight weeks. Then they go into a fight with a miniscule amount of tape and eight-ounce gloves. How hard is the steel going to be if it's not tempered? They need to go back to wearing the little gardening gloves like Joe Louis and Roberto Duran used to wear in training. They are so afraid of injuring their hands that they baby themselves. But what happens? They get into a fight and their hands are soft."

Vanishing, too, is the straight right cross, the trademark of such knockout merchants as Tommy Hearns, Michael Spinks, Alexis Arguello, Bob Foster and Julian Jackson.

"The stiff one-two is too much of a challenge," said Goossen. "Guys don't take the risk. In order to do it, you are basically saying, 'You know what? I'm coming with the straight right down the pike. Are you going to trade with me or try to slip it? Can I land it without getting hit in return?' It's the same as a baseball pitcher with a 98-mph fastball, challenging the batter. It takes guts to have faith in your punch."

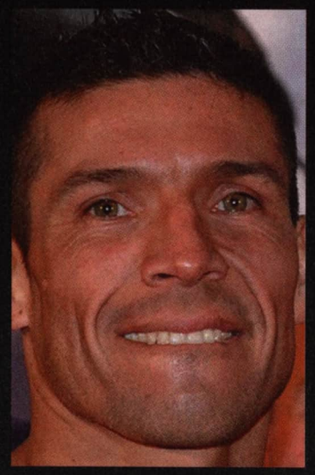
Heavyweight champ Wladimir Klitschko is a perfect example. He owns a good right, but he only throws it when the planets are perfectly aligned, his opponent is tired and there's absolutely no chance for a counter. Wlad and his brother Vitali have very high knockout percentages, but they spend a half hour tenderizing an opponent before going in for the kill. The Klitschkos aren't gunslingers; they're more like scientists pulling the wings from flies.

As for the old argument that punchers are born and not made,

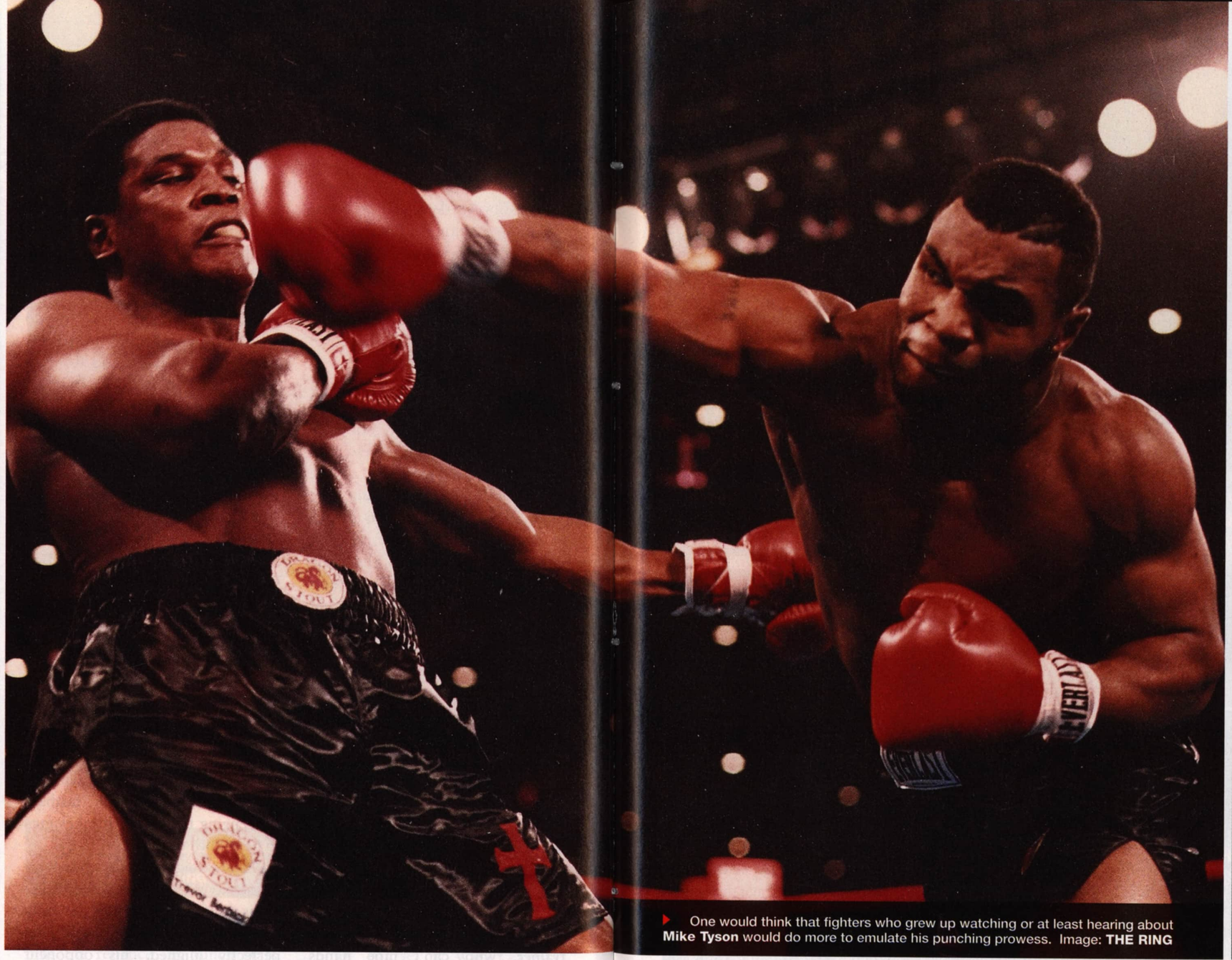


4. JHONNY GONZALEZ
RECORD: 51-7 (45 KOs)
KO PERCENTAGE: 77.59
TOP KOS: Gabriel Elizondo TKO 2, 2004; Hozumi Hasegawa TKO 4, 2011 (for WBC featherweight title).
THE FACTS: Is such a serious banger that he should've been on HBO all these years instead of Spanish-language television ... Is currently on an 11-bout knockout streak ... Gonzalez rose from a first-round knockdown to drop Elizondo four times in Round 2 ... Has had nearly 60 bouts spread out over a couple of weight classes but is still a dangerous puncher.

5. WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
RECORD: 56-3 (49 KOs)
KO PERCENTAGE: 83.05
TOP KOS: Calvin Brock TKO 7, 2006; Ray Austin KO 2, 2007; Sam Peter KO 10, 2010.
THE FACTS: Trainer Emanuel Steward has raved about the power in Klitschko's right hand ... Has also scored knockouts with his heavy left hook ... Doesn't have the gunslinger mentality, but that's partly because he has been KO'd himself a few times and doesn't like to take the risks ... Would rate higher if he pulled the trigger more often and earlier.



6. SERGIO MARTINEZ
RECORD: 48-2-2 (27 KOs)
KO PERCENTAGE: 51.92
TOP KOS: Saul Roman KO 4, 2007 (body shot); Paul Williams KO 2, 2010.
THE FACTS: Was matched hard as a novice against tough Argentine journeymen, so most of his early bouts went the full route ... Began showing his power with a late-round stoppage of well-regarded Adrian Stone in 2003, which began a seven bout KO streak ... Dropped Kermit Cintron during their controversial 2009 draw. Cintron declared it had to have been a head butt because he'd never been hit so hard ... One-punch KO of Williams was chosen as THE RING's Knockout of the Year.



One would think that fighters who grew up watching or at least hearing about **Mike Tyson** would do more to emulate his punching prowess. Image: **THE RING**

7. LUCIAN BUTE
RECORD: 30-0 (24 KOs)
KO PERCENTAGE: 80
TOP KOS: Edison Miranda TKO 3, 2010; Librado Andrade KO 4, 2009 (body shot).
THE FACTS: Comes disguised as a traditional boxer-puncher, but he throws some of the best uppercuts and body blows in the game ... Has stopped eight of his last 10 opponents ... Showed he had some special punching ability in only his ninth pro bout when he KO'd veteran and former titlist Dingaan Thobela ... Returned to his home country of Romania last July and left undefeated Jean Paul Mendy flat on his face in four ... Has scored 16 of his 24 career KOs before the fourth round.

Goossen disagrees.

"Technique can improve what you're born with," Goossen said. "Mike Nunn was a slapper; I taught him how to knock people out with one punch. The best punchers are just strong guys who learn how to do it the right way."

Even a bomber like Hearns was not a naturally gifted hitter.

"I taught Tommy," Steward said. "I showed him how to shift his weight and lock up on his wrist. He was a learned puncher, not a natural."

Harold "Shadow" Knight was a pretty good boxer in his day. As a trainer, he has worked the corners of Lewis and Monte Barrett. He now works with amateurs in New Jersey. He says there are plenty of "good" punchers around, but no "great" ones. Unlike Steward and Goossen, he isn't convinced power punching can be taught.

"You can make improvements, but you can't teach them to be Earnie Shavers or John 'The Beast' Mugabi. Those kinds of punchers are few and far between," Knight said.

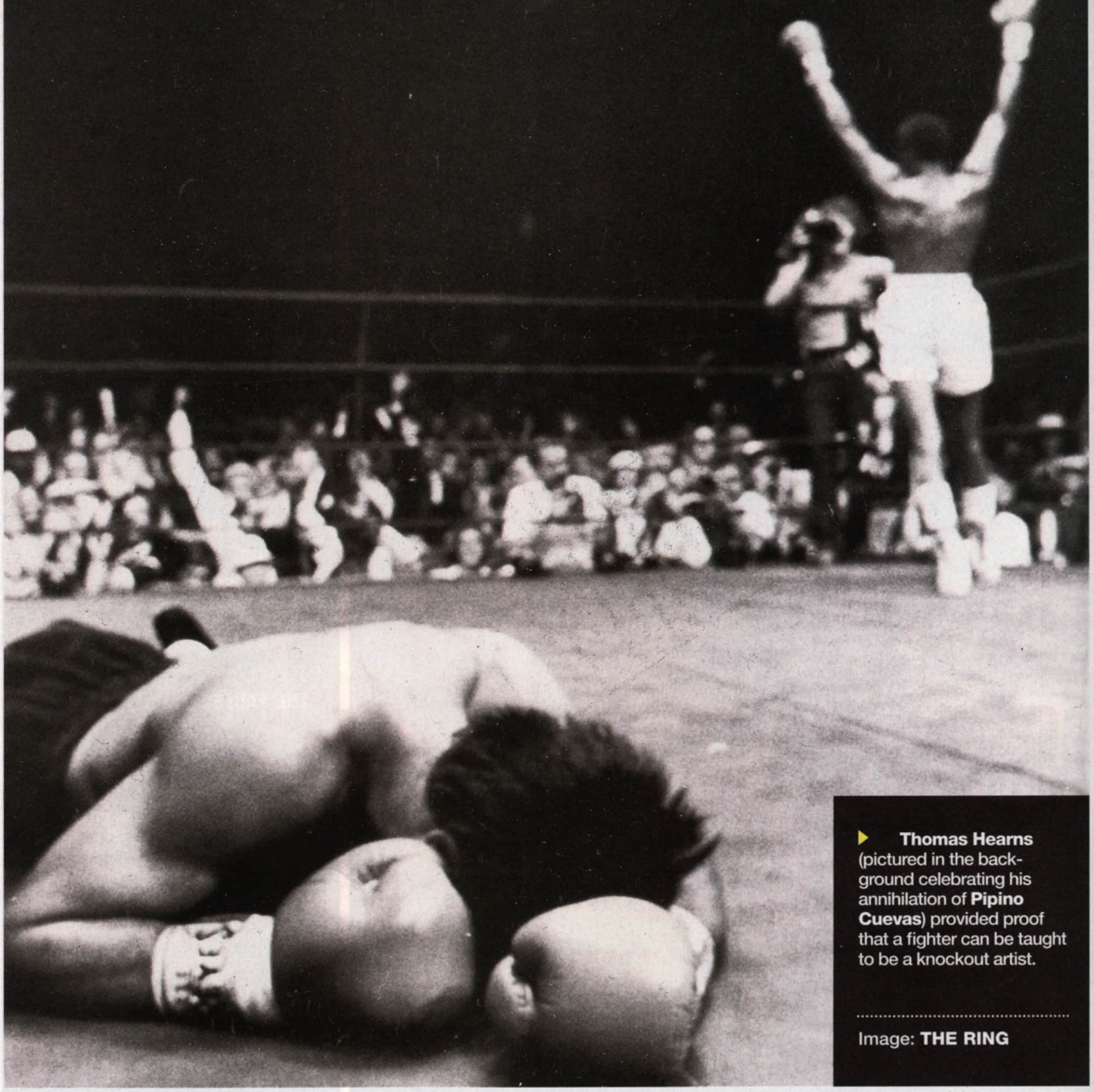
Knight feels fighters have lost power because they've lost everything else along with it.

"It comes down to them not being taught the basics," Knight said. "Paul Williams should be a big puncher. But he isn't utilizing all of his natural gifts. Amir Khan does some things right, but I don't think of him as a complete fighter. We give the fighters of today too much credit for doing one little thing. We praise a guy for having a left hook, but where's his right hand? Very few fighters today are complete fighters. When you're only working with one tool, it's harder for the knockouts to come."

Knight has also noticed that young fighters, particularly amateurs, exist in a bubble.

"They don't fight often enough, and they aren't around older fighters," said Knight. "How can they learn the tricks of the trade?" But even if they did mingle more, it seems young fighters are hesitant to shake off their amateur habits.

"Many won't adapt to the professional style, because they bring their amateur trainer with



Thomas Hearns (pictured in the background celebrating his annihilation of **Pipino Cuevas**) provided proof that a fighter can be taught to be a knockout artist.

Image: **THE RING**

them," said Goossen. "The amateur trainer is still using the amateur system."

Soft hands. A lack of basics. A fear of risk. The corrosive effects of amateur boxing. Is there any hope for punching in the future?

Goossen doesn't think anything will change unless the amateur system changes.

"There are too many restrictions in the amateur rings, and when you turn pro, you have to start from scratch. The hardest thing to teach these guys is how to hang in the pit and go nose to nose," Goossen said.

Goossen sees some value in the recent World Series of Boxing, an amateur tournament involving teams such as The L.A. Matadors, The Bangkok Elephants and The Milano Thunder. "No headgear, small gloves," said Goossen, who provides TV commentary for the WSB. "It's allowing the amateurs to fight in a professional setting. That is a start."

Knight is optimistic. "All we need are some trainers with old-school values. It'll take time. Maybe two more Olympics."

"I think we'll get some punching power back," Steward said. "They are starting to encourage the kids to follow through. I hope so, because you know I like knockouts."

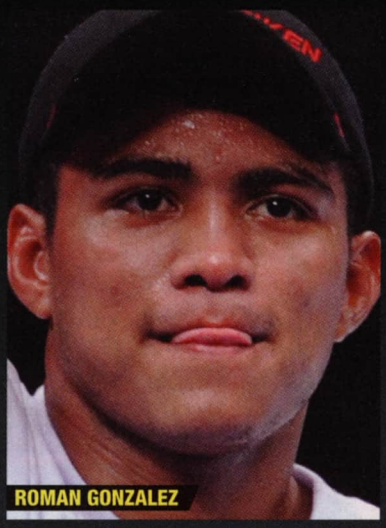
When asked to name a few top quality punchers working today, Steward took a long pause. He mumbled Manny Pacquiao's name, said something about Pacquiao using angles. Then he sighed.

"You got me,' he said. "I can't think of one. It's a bad generation." ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts.

8. ROMAN GONZALEZ
RECORD: 30-0 (25 KOs)
KO PERCENTAGE: 83.33
TOP KOS: Eriberto Gejon KO 1, 2007; Francisco Rosas KO 2, 2010; Omar Soto KO 2, 2011.
THE FACTS: Weighs only 108 pounds but hits like a bantamweight, having stopped 25 of 30 opponents … Stayed in Nicaragua for his first 16 bouts, all of which he won by KO … Traveled to Japan for his first bout outside of his home country and blasted out Eriberto Gejon in one … Has scored nine knockouts in the second round, seven in the first … Made his Las Vegas debut last October, stopping Omar Soto in two.

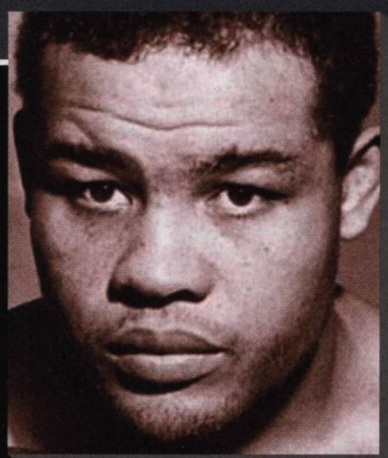
9. GENNADY GOLOVKIN
RECORD: 22-0 (19 KOs)
KO PERCENTAGE: 86.36
TOP KOS: Milton Nunez KO 1, 2010; Lajuan Simon KO 1, 2011.
THE FACTS: Has had only 22 bouts but shows great hitting ability …


ROMAN GONZALEZ

Was not ruined by the amateur system, as his knockout numbers show … Is currently recognized as the WBA middleweight titleholder… Stopped Kassim Ouma in 10, which shows he carries his power into the late rounds of a fight … Is still scoring one-round knockouts, even as the competition improves … KO'd Bute in their amateur days.

10. JAMES KIRKLAND
RECORD: 30-1 (27 KOs)
KO PERCENTAGE: 87.1
TOP KOS: Brian Vera TKO 8, 2008; Joel Julio TKO 6, 2009; Alfredo Angulo TKO 6, 2011.
THE FACTS: Has stopped 27 of 30 opponents … Has reminded some of a small Mike Tyson because of his build, aggressive style and knockouts … 22 of his 27 knockouts have come inside three rounds … Bounced back from his stunning KO loss to Nouhiro Ishida with an epic stoppage of Alfredo Angulo … It will be interesting to see how well his power holds up against other elite opponents.

HONORABLE MENTIONS:
Arthur Abraham, Alfredo Angulo, Randall Bailey, Vic Darchinyan, Yuriorkis Gamboa, Zab Judah, Lucas Matthysse, Toshiaki Nishioka, Victor Ortiz, Manny Pacquiao, Giovani Segura and David Tua.



Joe Louis might've been able to do more damage with one punch than any other fighter in history.

Image: **THE RING**

ALL-TIME LIST

The best ever at turning out an opponent's lights with one punch:

1. JOE LOUIS
2. RAY ROBINSON
3. THOMAS HEARNS
4. BOB FOSTER
5. SANDY SADDLER
6. EARNIE SHAVERS
7. SAM LANGFORD
8. STANLEY KETCHEL
9. JACK DEMPSEY
10. MIKE TYSON

HONORABLE MENTION:
Rocky Marciano, Max Baer, Sonny Liston, Sam Langford, Rocky Graziano, Bob Fitzsimmons, Jimmy Wilde, George Foreman, Alexis Arguello, Julian Jackson, Danny Lopez, Carlos Zarate, Wilfredo Gomez and Ruben Olivares.

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Juan Manuel Marquez and many others were fairly certain he had beaten **Manny Pacquiao** in their third meeting. The judges didn't think so. Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

JUDGMENT YEAR

2011 WAS ONE OF THE **WORST YEARS FOR JUDGING** IN RECENT MEMORY. WHAT'S GOING ON?

By: **Gary Andrew Poole**

When the scorecards came in at the Andre Ward-Carl Froch Super Six finale in December, Team Ward was nervous. In the last several years, judges' scoring has become more and more erratic, and Ward wasn't sure if the judges had scored the bout correctly or if he would be the victim of yet another fiasco. Despite fighting with a broken hand, Ward knew he had dominated the Englishman.

Judge John Keane was on target: 118-110

The other two judges, Craig Metcalfe and John Stewart, both scored it close at 115-113, which surprised most observers. Incredibly, it meant that if Froch had won one more round the bout would have been a majority draw.

10 WORST DECISIONS OF 2011

By: **Doug Fischer**

PAUL WILLIAMS MD 12
ERISLANDY LARA
JULY 9, ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.

Most members of the media at ringside thought Lara, who couldn't miss Williams with his overhand left, won the fight by at least a 116-112 tally. The official judges were later suspended by New Jersey's boxing commission.

ROBERT HELENIUS SD 12
DERECK CHISORA
DEC. 3, HELSINKI, FINLAND

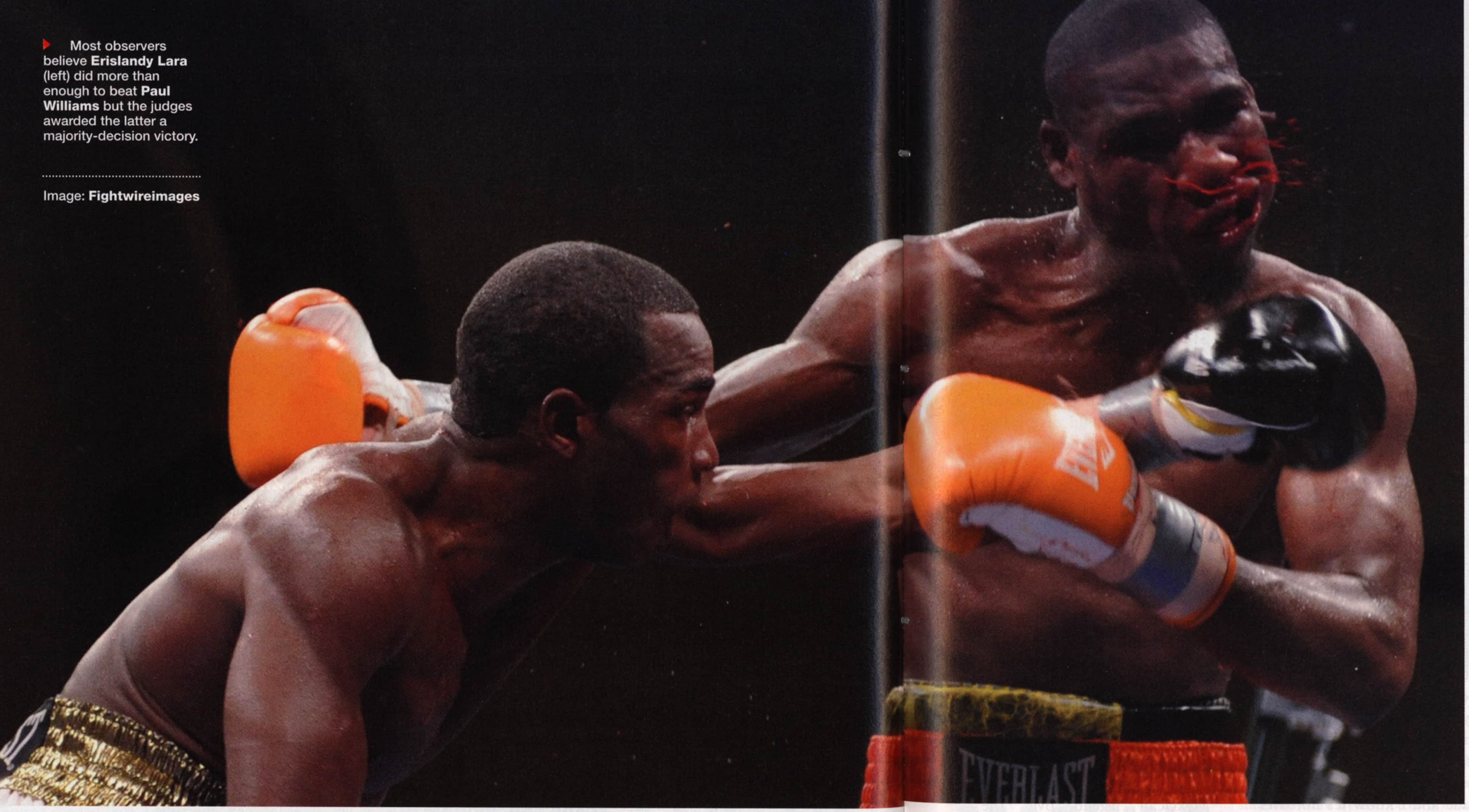
Chisora, who out-landed the young heavyweight contender in total punches and power shots in every round, according to the CompuBox stats, pressed his 6-foot-7 adversary throughout the European title bout. Chisora earned a shot at Vitali Klitschko with his losing effort.

MANNY PACQUIAO MD 12
JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
NOV. 12, LAS VEGAS

Marquez controlled the pace of the third go around with Pacquiao and appeared to befuddle his arch rival in many rounds. Most ringside reporters either scored the bout a draw or for Marquez by a few points. Some believe the Mexican veteran won by a wide margin.

DEVON ALEXANDER SD 10
LUCAS MATTHYSSE
JUNE 25, ST. LOUIS

Matthysse landed the harder blows throughout the bout, dropping Alexander in the fourth round, bulling the former 140-pound beltholder



Most observers believe **Erislandy Lara** (left) did more than enough to beat **Paul Williams** but the judges awarded the latter a majority-decision victory.

Image: **Fightwireimages**

Ward, while happy about his victory, was incensed by the judging. He wanted to comment on it and sought counsel from his veteran promoter, Dan Goossen. Goossen told him that he shouldn't talk about how terrible the judging was because everyone else was already saying it for him. But Team Ward, and several fighters interviewed for this article, have expressed a disturbing charge: that many modern judges are simply collecting trips and paychecks, and that they aren't taking their chosen profession seriously, which can result in life-altering results for fighters. Chuck Giampa, a retired judge, called 2011 the worst year for judging that he has seen in 30 years.

"In football, basketball, and baseball, you can lose but everything is intact: your endorsements, your chance to play at the highest level again," Ward told me. "But boxing is different. The judges need to be up to par in every single fight. I am happy it didn't become a factor but ..." His voice trailed off, knowing that a loss could have severely damaged his career.

Ward is expressing a major issue in boxing, which has experienced more controversial decisions over the past 12 months than perhaps any year in its history. We're not talking about fight fixing but basic incompetence with judges, of whom several seem ill-prepared to judge fights involving major-caliber opponents.

Late last year Richard Schaefer of Golden Boy Promotions said, "This whole year has been a horrible year in terms of refereeing and judging. People have to be held accountable."

That might be easy to say – and disputing referee and judge decisions are common in all sports – but because of boxing's lack of a central authority and confusion over the basic tenets of judging a fight, the number of blunders in recent months seems indicative of a deeper problem with official training, evaluation and policing. The frequency of controversial decisions, including the odd-ball scoring in the Pacquiao-Marquez fight (one judge had a very close fight 116-112 for Pacquiao, which was laughable) makes it feel as if judging has lost its balance.

Part of the problem, say fighters, promoters and even the judges themselves, is that state athletic commissions don't admit that there is a problem. Nevada State Athletic Commission Executive Director Keith Kizer told me that judging will always be an inexact science filled with controversy because people naturally see fights in different ways. He says Nevada handpicks its 17 judges from the amateur ranks and tries to bring them up slowly through mentoring. He sees great consistency in the judging in Nevada, and he tries to actively talk with other state

to the ropes and hurting the St. Louis native with body shots, but still wound up on the wrong side of a hometown decision.

MAURICIO HERRERA MD 10
MIKE DALLAS JR.
JUNE 24, TEMECULA, CALIF.

Dallas, who out-landed Herrera in six of the 10 rounds, controlled the tempo with his jab and footwork during the early rounds and was the stronger, busier fighter down the stretch. The speedster edged his sturdy, steady foe 215 to 170 in total punches, according to CompuBox (111 to 56 over the last three rounds). Judge Fritz Werner still somehow scored the bout 98-92 for Herrera.

FELIX STURM SD 12
MATTHEW MACKLIN
JUNE 25, COLOGNE, GERMANY

Macklin pressed the fight, out-landing the defending middleweight beltholder in power punches in every round. Sturm didn't begin to fight back in earnest until the late rounds but two judges still scored the entertaining bout for the titleholder by a 116-112 tally.

STURM D 12
MARTIN MURRAY
DEC. 2, MANNHEIM, GERMANY

Murray landed twice as many power shots, 184 to 90, in the hotly contested bout but still only managed a split draw. A stiff jab and tight, peek-a-boo defense obviously goes a long way in Germany, Sturm's home country, where both the Macklin and Murray bouts were fought.

Andre Ward (right) was pleased that he was awarded the decision over **Carl Froch** but angry that two of the three judges thought a one-sided fight was close. Image: **Tom Casino-Showtime**

athletic commission directors so he gets the best people if he decides to bring in an outside judge.

It's true that it is much easier to score a fight in the comfort of your living room while a judge is under the spotlight, requiring enormous concentration to stay focused and score a fight fairly. But many boxing people cite an erosion of professionalism among too many modern judges: judges drinking alcohol the night before a big bout, getting to the arena late and pre-fight chatting with friends instead of getting prepared for the mental stamina required to score a fight. Judges haven't been "brought up" like they used to, which might be one reason HBO is looking at something called PunchForce, a small device that goes into a boxer's wraps and can wirelessly show the force of punch.

Controversial decisions are bound to impact every sport, but consistently poor judging creates disillusionment, and that's bad for the business. Perhaps PunchForce could be boxing's instant replay, a way to see the effectiveness of punches and maybe even add it as a scoring element or at least a guide for judges, many of whom don't seem to know what type of punches cause the most damage.

While boxing has always had its concerns about fight fixing and promotional control of the judges, the issue seems more mundane – better training, more consistent mentorship and real accountability. "There is a stigma in boxing because there are so many odd-ball decisions," says promoter Goossen, who would like to see some sort of reform for the sake of the sport. "I sit there ringside and I know it's not over until it's over. Whatever is said and done, until they tally the scores of the three judges, nothing matters."

Ray Mancini, a popular former titleholder, watches today's fights and he understands the frustration of modern fighters and fans. His view is simple: "It's not rocket science to be schooled on what to look for, if you're a judge. Aggression, effective aggression, ring generalship, hit the other man more than he hits you. But many judges don't know a fish hook from a left hook. We need better judges for the sake of boxing." ■

ADRIEN BRONER UD 10
DANIEL PONCE DE LEON
MARCH 5, ANAHEIM, CALIF.

The bigger, younger, faster, stronger man did not impress in his first real test. Some ringside observers thought the two scores of 96-94 for Broner could have easily gone to the undersized veteran. Everyone agreed that Tony Crebs' tally of 99-91 for Broner was criminal.

YOAN PABLO HERNANDEZ TD 6
STEVE CUNNINGHAM I
OCT. 1, NEUBRANDENBURG, GERMANY

Cunningham was dropped (and legitimately rattled) by a left cross near the end of the first round, but the American took firm command of the next five rounds, walking down and outworking Hernandez with crisp jabs and right hands. However, the Cuban southpaw was deemed unfit to continue due to cuts from accidental head butts after the sixth round and Cunningham lost a very disputed technical split decision.

JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ JR. MD 12
SEBASTIAN ZBIK
JUNE 4, LOS ANGELES

Zbik landed 138 more power punches than the son of the Mexcican legend over the course of their competitive middleweight title bout, according to CompuBox. The defending beltholder surely would have won the fight had it taken place in his native Germany instead of Los Angeles. (Who says bad decisions only happen in Germany?)

Technological advances, such as **CompuBox** punch statistics, can help us understand what is happening in the ring but aren't meant to replace judges.

Image: **Tri Nguyen**

OUT OF THE NORM

MAN VS. MACHINE

By: **Norm Frauenheim**

The arguments that blossom in the wake of a controversial decision are repetitive enough to be called inevitable: familiar players, questions, insults, bruises-hidden-behind-sunglasses and, increasingly, CompuBox. It was there all over again in the noisy aftermath of Manny Pacquiao's majority decision over Juan Manuel Marquez in November.

For a room full of media and wannabes gathered at the post-fight debate convinced that Marquez had been robbed, CompuBox's punch statistics were a reason to reconsider. There was initial fury over the scorecards. Two were for Pacquiao, 116-112 and 115-113. The third was a draw, 114-114. Marquez was angry. The room was stunned.

Throughout the restless mob during the late-night news conference at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, the same question was whispered, asked and screamed. What were those two judges watching? Maybe, just maybe, they saw the same thing as CompuBox with numbers that favored Pacquiao, both in total punches, 176-138, and in power shots, 117-110.

Pacquiao promoter Bob Arum referred to them. So, too, did Pacquiao trainer Freddie Roach. Yet, neither did so in a tone that said they were convinced the numbers added up to the last word in an argument without resolution.

"I don't see fights that way," Roach said a few weeks later when asked about punch stats. "It doesn't give you a picture of an overall fight."

It doesn't attempt to, said Bob Canobbio, who in 1985 created and sold the idea to television networks always looking for new graphics and enhanced technology. Canobbio is the first to say that no fighter has ever won a title by winning the punch stats.

"I'm providing a statistical barometer, that's all," Canobbio said. "I've never intended it to be

the end-all, be-all."

As it was for Arum and Roach after Pacquiao-Marquez III, however, it has become a reference point. In post-fight reports, writers and broadcasters refer to punch stats almost as if they were batting averages in major-league baseball's daily round-up. No story is complete without them.

Punch stats loom as even more significant, perhaps, for a younger generation of fans who need a GPS to find the neighborhood Starbucks. Digital is what they know and what they believe in. There is plenty of legitimate skepticism about whether technology will ever measure ring generalship, effective punching and many of the so-called intangibles that account for toughness and resilience. Only a trained judge armed with pencil-and-paper technology can do that, says retired judge Chuck Giampa.

"No doubt, we're in a technological society," said Giampa, who argues that Marquez beat Pacquiao in the second rematch because he landed more punches with effectiveness not reflected by CompuBox. "But only the human eye can judge a close fight."

In an experiment, Giampa challenges CompuBox to position an operator near each of the three ringside seats where traditional judges are located. CompuBox currently uses two operators, one assigned to each corner. Both are located on the media side of the ring, in a row behind the lead broadcast team.

"Then, I'd like to see if they agree," said Giampa, who says location, location, location account for different views and often very different scorecards. "I'll bet that they don't."

Giampa forcefully argues that a good judge must ignore every outside influence when he or she takes a seat alongside the ropes. That used to mean crowd noise. Still does. But Giampa fears punch stats could become another factor, especially for a younger judge who grew up in the digital age.

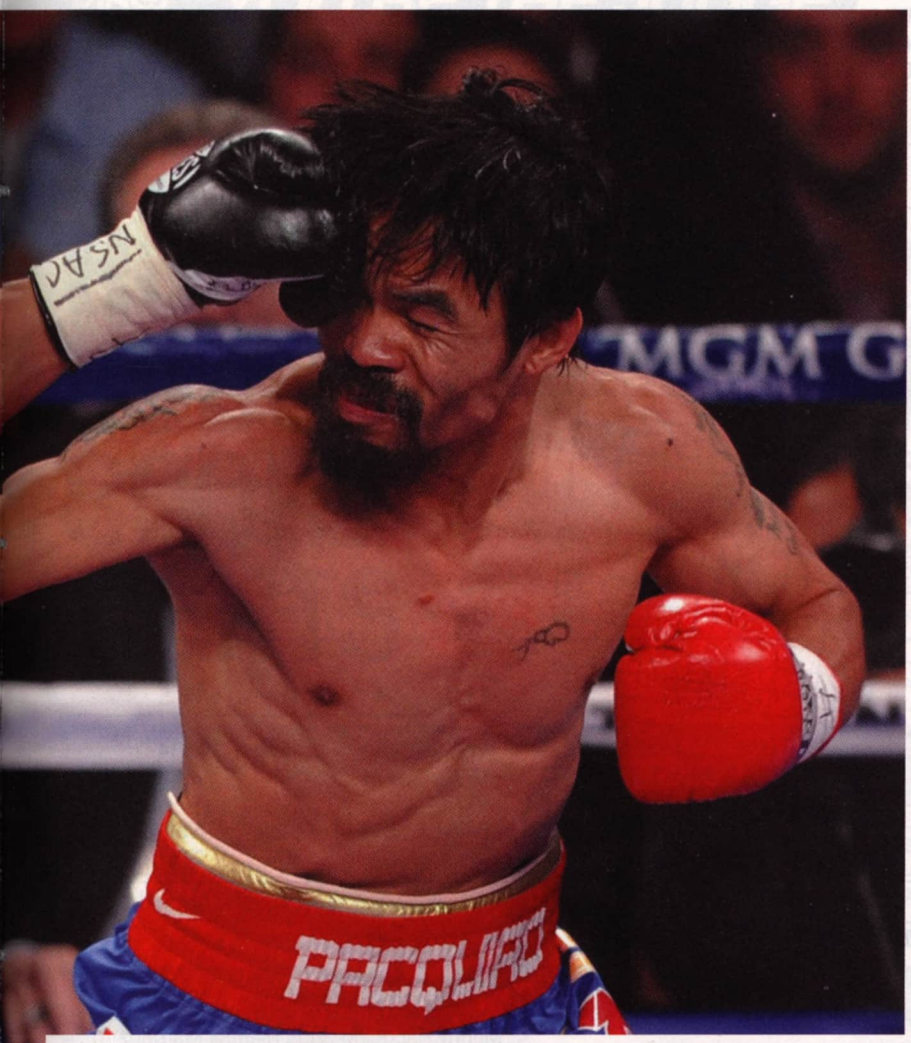
Most of those who witnessed the third meeting between **Manny Pacquiao** and **Juan Manuel Marquez** believe the Mexican won even though CompuBox statistics favored Pacquiao slightly. Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

"Let's say you're a judge waiting to work a fight and you're watching one of the card's earlier fights on TV," Giampa says. "The commentators are talking about how the punch stats have it this way or that. A judge could hear that and think, 'Well, CompuBox is scoring punches in a certain way.'

"That could have an influence in how the later fight is scored. In that respect, it's a negative."

But technology moves forward, just as surely as Pacquiao does. Canobbio says he is not trying to unseat the judges. He also doesn't claim perfection either. The stats, he says, include a one-to-two percent margin of error.

Technology is impossible to predict. If Olympic boxing is a guide, however, Giampa is right: Only a trained, unbiased eye can judge a fight fairly. The Olympics went to computers after Roy Jones Jr. was robbed of a gold medal at the infamous 1988 Seoul Games. Since 1992, five judges at different locations on the floor surrounding

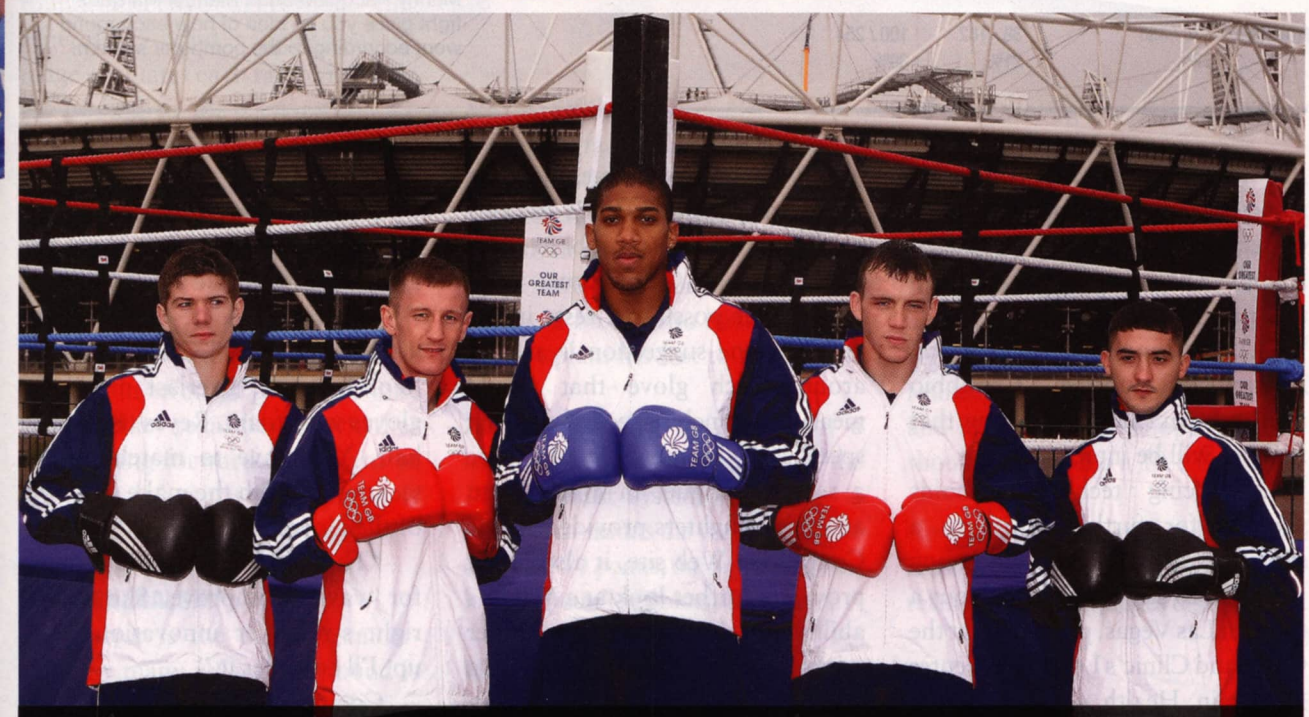


the Olympic ring are supposed to punch a keypad every time they see a punch land.

But the scores are often bizarre. Medals are sometimes won by low scores that don't even add up to double digits. The New York Yankees score more in a rain-shortened game. An inevitable result is the suspicion of fights fixed by international judges punching a button not for what they see, but for what they want for themselves or their country.

"I'm not sure I'd want to be part of that," said Canobbio, who has seven operators trained first by judging tapes of old fights and then at a live fight.

AIBA, amateur boxing's governing body, also wants no part of it anymore. It announced on Feb 12 that after the London Olympics in August it will go back to a 10-point-must system at the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro. It wasn't clear whether that means a return to pencil-and-paper technology.



The boxers who take part in the 2012 London Olympics, including members of the British team (pictured here), will be the last to fight under the current computer scoring system. The Games will return to the 10-point-must system in 2016.
Image: **Getty Images**

COMPUBOX PUNCHSTAT REPORT

MANNY PACQUIAO W 12 (MAJ)
JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
11/10/2011 LAS VEGAS

Pacquiao had just a 117-100 edge in power shots landed , while Marquez landed the cleaner shots. Pac was busier, averaging 49 punches thrown per round to 36 per round for Marquez. Marquez threw a fight-high 56 punches in round nine. Then, with the fight on the line, he averaged just 36 punches thrown over the last three rounds.

TOTAL PUNCHES LANDED /THROWN

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PACQUIAO	11/38	9/42	10/53	15/47	13/45	15/46	21/57	11/46	17/70	18/50	18/47	18/37
	29%	21%	19%	32%	29%	33%	37%	24%	24%	36%	38%	49%
MARQUEZ	7/32	8/30	10/39	12/43	12/34	10/28	12/31	13/34	17/56	13/37	13/36	11/36
	22%	27%	26%	28%	35%	36%	39%	38%	30%	35%	36%	31%

JABS LANDED /THROWN

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PACQUIAO	6/28	5/31	4/32	5/22	8/29	4/20	5/26	3/26	3/25	5/21	3/21	8/23
	21%	16%	12%	23%	28%	20%	19%	12%	12%	24%	14%	35%
MARQUEZ	1/14	2/14	6/23	3/20	4/16	1/14	1/10	3/13	4/17	4/13	4/16	5/12
	7%	14%	26%	15%	25%	7%	10%	23%	24%	31%	25%	42%

POWER PUNCHES LANDED /THROWN

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PACQUIAO	5/10	4/11	6/21	10/25	5/16	11/26	16/31	8/20	14/45	13/29	15/26	10/14
	50%	36%	29%	40%	31%	42%	52%	40%	31%	45%	58%	71%
MARQUEZ	6/18	6/16	4/16	9/23	8/18	9/14	11/21	10/21	13/39	9/24	9/20	6/24
	33%	38%	25%	39%	44%	64%	52%	48%	33%	38%	45%	25%

FINAL PUNCHSTAT REPORT

	TOTAL PUNCHES	JABS	POWER PUNCHES
PACQUIAO	176 / 578	59 / 304	117 / 274
	30%	19%	43%
MARQUEZ	138 / 436	38 / 182	100 / 254
	32%	21%	39%

▶ The CompuBox report of the third Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez fight gives you an idea of how each round went according to the computer system.

But it's safe to say that somebody somewhere will still use some sort of technology to score the medal rounds. The software has been up and running for decades.

"Again, I'm providing a service, a number of punches," Canobbio said. " I can't determine how that number will be interpreted."

Advancing technology holds promise for further layers to a statistical analysis with intriguing potential to say even more about a fight. In Las Vegas, physicians at the Cleveland Clinic's Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health are conducting a long-term study that includes an experimental mouthpiece with an embedded computer chip. It's hoped that it will measure the impact of punches. That's just one application that Canobbio says might work for CompuBox.

Another possibility rests in the gloves. One suggestion is a band around each glove that would measure a punch's speed. A slowing speed later in the fight might be a sign of fatigue. In a long-term analysis of fighters provided on the CompuBox Web site, it also might provide a further look at a fighter's ability to take punch. One fighter might not get knocked down by a number that registers heavy power. Another might have a record of getting knocked down or out by a punch with a number reflecting lesser power.

Making it work, however, isn't easy. A chip inside each glove has also been introduced as a possibility.

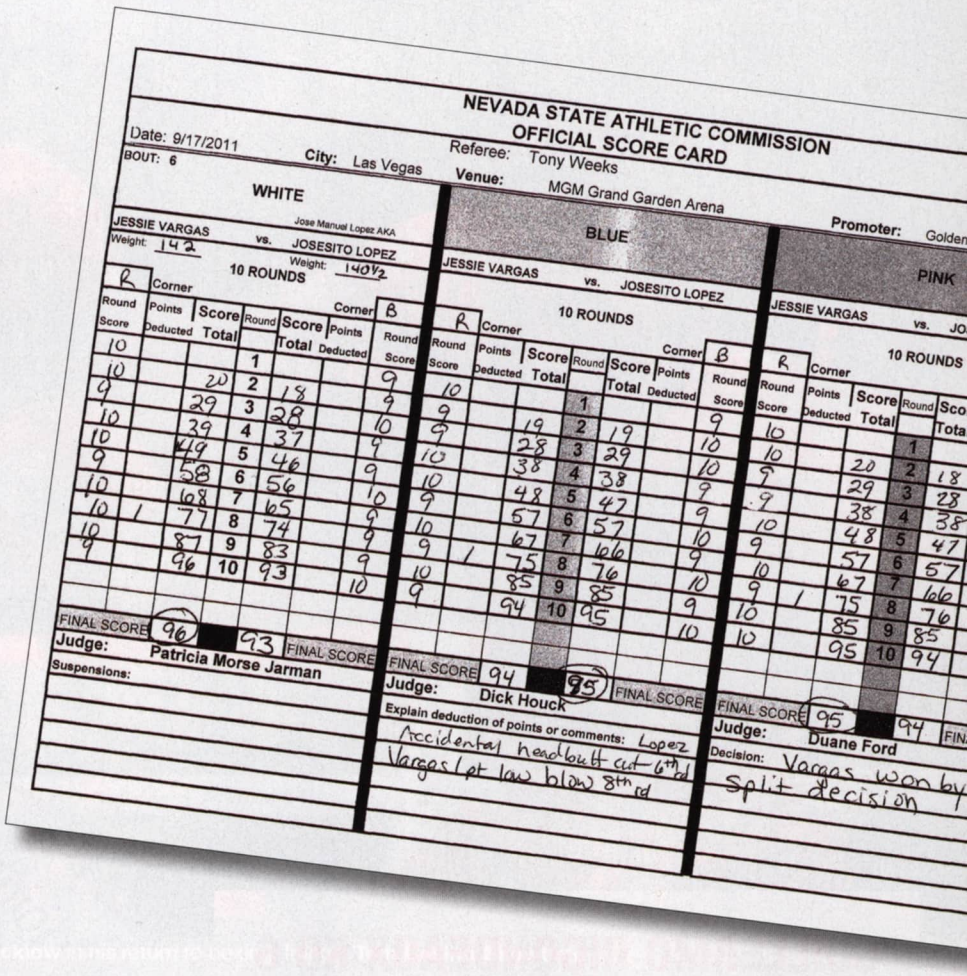
"There are four, five different kinds of gloves," Canobbio said. "For instance, Everlast makes its gloves with foam. Reyes uses horse hair. You have to match up the technology with the make and style of the gloves.

"That said, I'm always looking for ways to improve. Should the right system or innovation come up, I'll consider it."

CompuBox wouldn't be the reference point it has become if he didn't. ■

HOW JUDGES SCORE FIGHTS

By: **Chuck Giampa**



NEVADA STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION
OFFICIAL SCORE CARD

Date: 9/17/2011 City: Las Vegas Referee: Tony Weeks
BOUT: 6 Venue: MGM Grand Garden Arena Promoter: Golden

WHITE — JESSIE VARGAS (Jose Manuel Lopez AKA) vs. JOSESITO LOPEZ — Weight: 142 / Weight: 140½ — 10 ROUNDS

R Corner						B Corner
Round Score	Points Deducted	Score Total	Round	Score Total	Points Deducted	Round Score
10			1			9
10		20	2	18		9
9		29	3	28		10
10		39	4	37		9
9		49	5	46		9
10		58	6	56		10
10		68	7	65		9
10	1	77	8	74		9
10		87	9	83		9
9		96	10	93		10
FINAL SCORE		96		93		FINAL SCORE

Judge: Patricia Morse Jarman
Suspensions:

BLUE — JESSIE VARGAS vs. JOSESITO LOPEZ — 10 ROUNDS

R Corner						B Corner
Round Score	Points Deducted	Score Total	Round	Score Total	Points Deducted	Round Score
10			1			9
9		19	2	19		10
9		28	3	29		10
10		38	4	38		9
10		48	5	47		9
9		57	6	57		10
10		67	7	66		9
9	1	75	8	76		10
10		85	9	85		9
9		94	10	95		10
FINAL SCORE		94		95		FINAL SCORE

Judge: Dick Houck
Explain deduction of points or comments: Lopez accidental headbutt cut 6th rd Vargas let law blow 8th rd

PINK — JESSIE VARGAS vs. JO — 10 ROUNDS

R Corner						B Corner
Round Score	Points Deducted	Score Total	Round	Score Total	Points Deducted	Round Score
10			1			
10		20	2	18		
9		29	3	28		
9		38	4	38		
10		48	5	47		
9		57	6	57		
10		67	7	66		
9	1	75	8	76		
10		85	9	85		
10		95	10	94		
FINAL SCORE		95		94		FIN

Judge: Duane Ford
Decision: Vargas won by split decision

People often ask me how or why judges score rounds the way they do. Here's how it works:

There are three major criteria that judges should use in scoring each round: effective aggression, ring generalship and aggression. A judge evaluates each factor in order, proceeding to the next only if no clear advantage can be determined.

EFFECTIVE AGGRESSION:
This is the most important factor in determining the winner of each round. A judge must decide which fighter landed the most effective punches in terms of power, volume and accuracy regardless of whether he's moving forward, backward or sideways, is against the ropes or is counter punching.

RING GENERALSHIP:
This factor is the most misunderstood by many judges. If a round is too close to call based on effective aggression, the fighter who controls the action and shuts down his opponent should win that round.

AGGRESSION:
If the two factors mentioned above fail to produce a winner, then, and only then, should the round be scored in favor of the aggressor – the one who forces the action against a boxer who backpedals or doesn't plant his feet to fight.

After determining the winner of a round, the judges must then use the 10-point-must system to provide a score. That means the winner must be awarded 10 points, the only exception being a point (or points) deduction.

Here is how the 10-point system generally works:

10-10: The judge couldn't pick a winner. This is relatively rare.

10-9: One fighter has anywhere from a slight to clear advantage.

10-8: One fighter dominates the other, even when there is no knockdown. Also, if a fighter wins a round and also knocks down his opponent, he generally will be awarded a 10-8 round. If a fighter is losing a round and knocks down his opponent, he should be awarded a 10-9 round.

Knockdowns and point deductions must be scored at the discretion of the referee even if the judges disagree. ■

Chuck Giampa can be reached at ***chuckgiampa@aol.com.***

Guillermo Rigondeaux (right) overwhelmed **Rico Ramos** to win the WBA junior featherweight belt.

Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX KO 6 RICO RAMOS

DATE: JAN. 20, 2012
LOCATION: LAS VEGAS
DIVISION: JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT
WEIGHTS: RAMOS 122; RIGONDEAUX 120½
RING RATING (GOING INTO FIGHT): RAMOS NO. 2; RIGONDEAUX NO. 6
NETWORK: SHOWTIME

Despite having only compiled eight bouts during the first two years of his pro career, former Cuban amateur star Guillermo Rigondeaux was the betting favorite going into his challenge to WBA 122-pound titleholder Rico Ramos at the Palms Casino Resort.

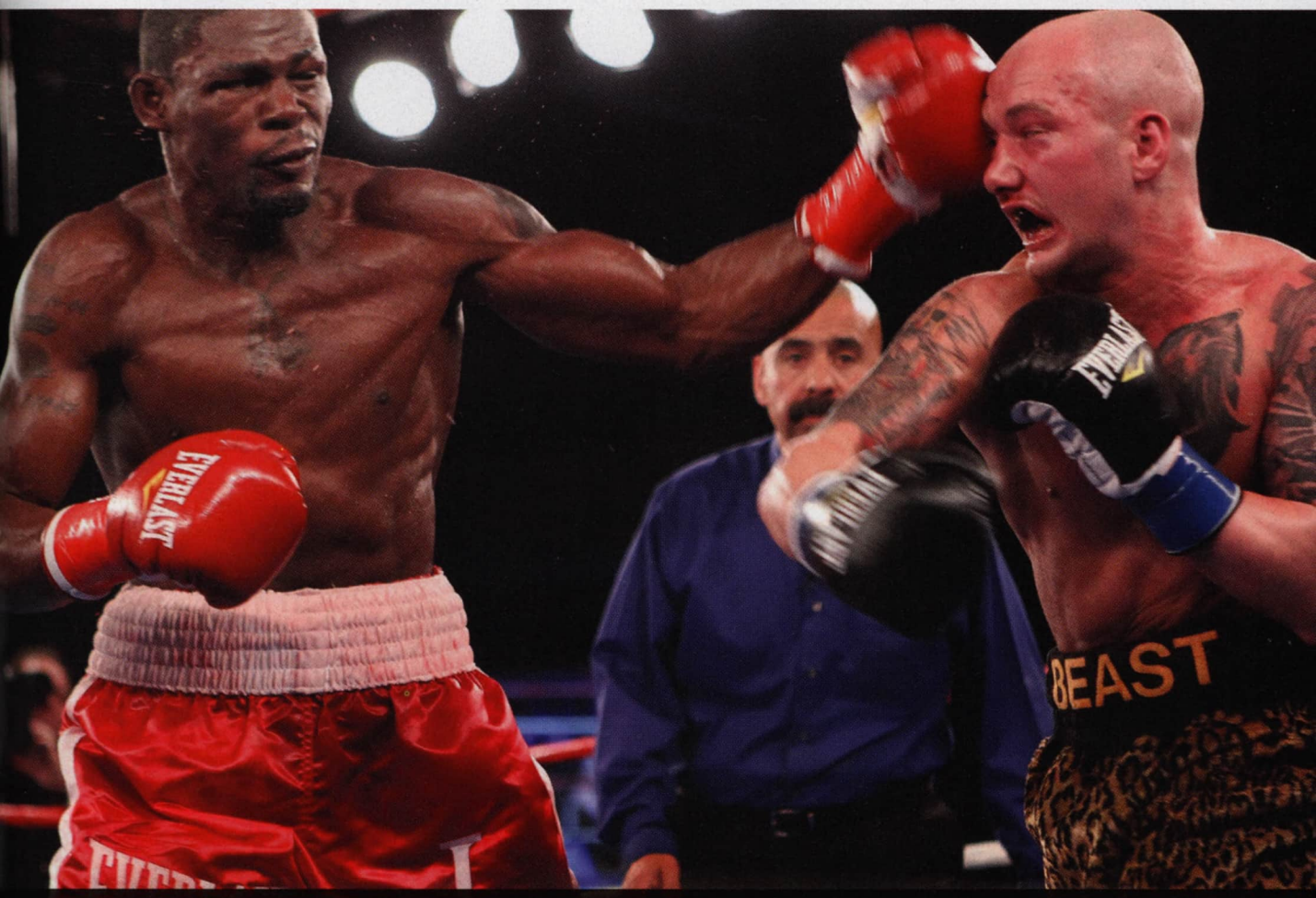
The 31-year-old southpaw proved the odds makers correct by knocking out Ramos in the sixth round of their *ShoBox: The New Generation* main event.

Ramos (20-1, 11 KOs) suffered a first-round knockdown and seemed bewildered by the Cuban's cool counter-punching style for the next four rounds before Rigondeaux clipped him with a swiping right uppercut that landed high on the head a minute into the sixth round.

The punch, which drew a warning from referee Joe Cortez, appeared to stun Ramos and take what little will he had left to win as the 24-year-old from Los Angeles turned his back on the challenger and retreated to the ropes before the third man in the ring called the fighters back into action.

Rigondeaux, a two-time Olympic gold medalist who many laud as one of the greatest amateur boxers ever, seized the opportunity to end the uneventful fight by charging Ramos with a series of hard lefts to the head. Ramos blocked the punches with his gloves as he backed into a corner, where Rigondeaux wisely switched his power hand to the overwhelmed youth's midsection. A hard left to the gut dropped Ramos to the canvas, where he rolled over on his back for Cortez's 10 count at the 1:29 mark.

With the victory, Rigondeaux (9-0, 8 knockouts), who is now based in Miami, Fla., joined a small club of fighters who won major titles before their 10th



Jermain Taylor (left) stopped **Jessie Nicklow** in his return to boxing. Image: **Tom Casino-Showtime**

pro bout. He was emotional after his victory but not surprised that he won.

"I was ready to win the title last year but they closed the door on me in 2011," Rigondeaux told Showtime's Steve Farhood through manager Luis DeCubas Sr. "2012 is going to be my time. Ramos is a very good fighter but I trained very hard for this fight, and when I am at my best no one can beat me."

Rigondeaux is willing to put that boast to the test. He called out pound-for-pound-rated Nonito Donaire, who was scheduled to make his junior featherweight debut against former 122-pound beltholder Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. on Feb. 4. Both fighters are promoted by Top Rank and have been mentioned as possible opponents for one another.

Should they meet, the Cuban will have to improve certain facets of his game if he hopes to beat the budding Filipino star. It will take more than a hard counter left hand and pawing jab to control Donaire as he did Ramos.

Perhaps the bigger challenge for Rigondeaux will be fighting in a more fan-friendly manner. Between the first- and sixth-round knockdowns, his fight with Ramos was rather boring.

– Doug Fischer

JERMAIN TAYLOR TKO 8 JESSIE NICKLOW

Jermain Taylor made the most of his return to the ring after more than two years on the mend, stopping journeyman Jessie Nicklow in eight rounds on a Dec. 30 *ShoBox* card from Cabazon, Calif. Taylor dominated throughout the contest but the stoppage by referee Ray Corona was highly dubious, as no punches of real consequence were landed and Nicklow (22-3-3, 8 KOs) wasn't in significant danger.

The 33-year-old former middleweight champion looked sharp considering the lengthy layoff, his first bout at 160 after competing in the super middleweight Super Six World Boxing Classic.

Andre Dirrell had no trouble with Darryl Cunningham in his comeback fight. Image: Tom Casino-Showtime

Taylor (29-4-1, 18 KOs) consistently landed clean power shots, 80 of 110 thrown, according to CompuBox. Nicklow, a 24-year-old Baltimore native, had no answers yet fought bravely and deserved the chance to go the distance.

ANDRE DIRRELL TKO 2 DARRYL CUNNINGHAM

Former super middleweight beltholder Andre Dirrell made a successful return of his own on the Taylor-Nicklow card, dispensing of Darryl Cunningham in just two rounds.

Returning after an injury suffered in his victory over Arthur Abraham in March of 2010, the elder of the fighting Dirrell brothers was competing for the first time in more than 22 months, but he appeared sharp as ever. Dirrell (20-1, 14 KOs) dropped Cunningham (24-3, 10 KOs) hard with a left hand in the second round. Cunningham beat the count but was again knocked down, this time by a right hook.

The Detroit-based fighter managed to get up again but his corner stopped the bout, giving Dirrell the victory by TKO at 2:05. The Flint, Mich., native is back in the mix, where he is eyeing bouts with the top fighters at super middleweight.

TAKASHI UCHIYAMA KO 11 JORGE SOLIS

Japanese beltholder Takashi Uchiyama dispatched of former title challenger Jorge Solis (40-4-2, 29 KOs) with a single vicious left hook that rendered the Mexican unconscious on Dec. 31 in Yokohama.

Uchiyama (18-0, 15 KOs) was making the fourth defense of the WBA title he won against Juan Carlos

Salgado by a 12th-round stoppage back in January 2010. Uchiyama, 32, was fighting for just the second time in 2011 after suffering a serious right hand injury against Takashi Miura in January of last year.

THE RING's No. 1 junior lightweight was ahead 98-92 on two cards and 99-91 on the third at the time of the stoppage. The 32-year-old Solis, THE RING's No. 8 130-pounder, suffered his second consecutive knockout defeat, the other coming against Yuriorkis Gamboa in Mar. 2011.

CELESTINO CABALLERO UD 12 SATOSHI HOSONO

Panama's Celestino Caballero was once one of boxing's most avoided fighters, with his long jab, great height and high punch output. That all changed when he suffered a major upset against Jason Litzau in late 2010 on HBO.

But now Caballero has reeled off two straight dominating victories and looks to be back, as he made the first successful defense of his WBA featherweight strap.

Caballero, 35, traveled to Satoshi Hosono's native Japan on New Year's Eve and doled out a beating, punishing the 28-year-old, frame after frame.

Caballero's height and reach advantages and punch output were far too much for the challenger to cope with, as Hosono lost a wide decision by scores of 119-108 twice and a curious tally of 116-110.

OMAR FIGUEROA TKO 6 MICHAEL PEREZ

Omar Figueroa (14-0-1, 11 KOs) dispatched of Michael Perez (15-1-1, 9 KOs) in six rounds in a highly entertaining battle of undefeated lightweights Jan. 6 at Fantasy Springs Casino in Indio, Calif.

The 135-pounders waged war at a frenetic pace, exchanging many hard shots on the inside.

Figueroa, 22, applied constant pressure on Perez and targeted the Newark, N.J. native's midsection, hoping to slow him down. It worked. Perez slowly grew tired, finally going down in the sixth from a vicious body shot followed by a combination to the head.

Perez, 21, beat the count, but his corner wisely stopped it following the round, giving Figueroa the biggest win of his career.

Figueroa landed 78 body shots in all, quite an impressive number.

LUIS RAMOS UD 10 RAYMUNDO BELTRAN

Luis Ramos (21-0, 9 KOs) defeated veteran Raymundo Beltran (25-6, 17 KOs) by a 10-round unanimous decision Jan. 6 at the Fantasy Springs Casino in Indio, Calif., the headline bout of the first *ShoBox* card of 2012.

Luis Ramos (left) passed a significant test when he narrowly defeated **Raymundo Beltran**. Image: **Tom Casino-Showtime**

Ramos, 23, established himself as a prospect at 135 pounds with the victory over the Freddie Roach-trained Beltran, who most recently was seen on *ShoBox* in a close fight with Sharif Bogere. Once again, Beltran was on the wrong end of a razor-thin decision, losing by scores of 97-93, 97-93 and 96-94.

It was a crowd-pleasing affair, with the 30-year-old Beltran giving Ramos fits at times. Beltran came on strong in the end, but Ramos had put enough rounds in the bank to ensure victory in his first 10-round bout.

DENIS DOUGLIN SD 8 STEVEN MARTINEZ

Junior middleweight prospect Denis Douglin (14-1, 8 KOs) notched the biggest win of his career, edging previously undefeated Steven Martinez (11-1, 9 KOs) on Jan. 6 in Key West, Fla., in the kick-off bout for the 2012 season of ESPN's *Friday Night Fights*.

There were many close rounds and the bout could have gone either way, but Michael Pernick and Bill Ray saw it for "Da Momma's Boy" 77-75, which overruled Rocky Young's tally of 77-75 for Martinez.

The win was vital for the Al Haymon-advised fighter, as it was just his second fight since the shocking knockout loss to Doel Carrasquillo in Feb. 2011.
The Marlboro, N.J.-based fighter used solid defense and deft counter punching to stymie the Bronx, N.Y., native and earn the nod.

Douglin, 23, was a late replacement for Jonathan Cepeda, who was forced to withdraw from his bout with the 21-year-old Martinez due to injury.

Teon Kennedy (right) and **Christopher Martin** fought to an entertaining draw. Image: **Naoki Fukuda**

TEON KENNEDY D 10 CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

The junior featherweight prospects were hoping to bounce back after suffering their first career losses. Instead, they had to settle for a draw in this compelling *Friday Night Fights* matchup Jan. 13 at The Joint at the Hard Rock in Las Vegas.

Judge Al Lefkowitz scored it for Kennedy, 97-93, but was overruled by judges Robert Hoyle and Dave Moretti, both of whom had it 95-95.

Kennedy, a 25-year-old Philadelphian, pressed the action, sticking his head in the San Diego native's chest as he teed off with power shots. Kennedy's best success came when he pinned Martin, 25, along the ropes. Martin (23-1-3, 6 KOs) sought to counter the hard-charging Kennedy (17-1-2, 7 KOs) and landed some effective combinations while going backward.

This bout begs for a rematch.

ARTHUR ABRAHAM KO 5 PABLO OSCAR NATALIO FARIAS

Arthur Abraham (33-3, 27 KOs) was a big favorite heading into the Super Six World Boxing Classic but won just one bout, a knockout of Jermain Taylor.

Abraham was successful in his first post-Super Six fight, knocking out Pablo Oscar Natalio Farias (19-2, 11 KOs) on Jan. 14 in Offenburg, Germany, but again seemed lethargic and didn't put his punches together.

Abraham, 31, lost the first two rounds to the 24-year-old Argentine but began to come on near the end of the third and landed effective body shots.

In the fifth, the Armenian landed a right hook to the body and followed up with a left to the head that dropped Farias. Farias beat the count but went down again, this time as a result of two right hands.

After Farias beat the count for the second time, Abraham sensed the moment and finished his foe with a single body shot. Referee Manuel Maritxalar halted the bout two minutes into the fifth.

JOEL DIAZ JR. TKO 7 GUY ROBB

On Jan. 20 in the season opener, Joel Diaz (7-0, 6 KOs) and Guy Robb (7-1, 3 KOs) engaged in the epitome of a ShoBox bout: a war of unbeaten junior lightweight prospects.

Diaz, 19, went down after a hard right hand in the second round but rebounded to put Robb, 22, down twice in the third. The bout was all-action, as the two fighters realized the stakes and fought to elevate their careers.

There were many ebbs and flows, but Diaz, of Palmdale, Calif. came out on top after hurting Robb, of Sacramento, Calif., in the seventh. Robb wasn't punching back when referee Vic Drakulich halted the bout at 2:20. Diaz was on top of all three cards when the scheduled eight-round bout was stopped.

DEMARCUS CORLEY UD 10 GABRIEL BRACERO

DeMarcus "Chop Chop" Corley turned back the clock, dropping previously undefeated prospect Gabriel Bracero three times en route to an impressive upset decision victory in the main event of Lou DiBella's *Broadway Boxing* series Jan. 21 at the Roseland Ballroom in New York's theater district.

The judges scored it 94-92, 94-92 and 96-90 for Corley, which snapped a six-fight losing streak for the veteran.

Corley (38-19-1, 22 KOs) busted open Bracero's right eye with an overhand left in the second round, and then dropped the junior welterweight prospect with a devastating right hook.

The 37-year-old's defense and southpaw stance gave the Brooklyn native fits throughout, making it difficult to land any shots.

Corley again dropped his opponent hard in the third round, this time the result of a hard straight left. Bracero beat the count again and Corley proceeded to pour on flush rights and lefts.

Bracero, 30, went down for the third time in the fifth, when the ropes held him up after a Corley combination. Bracero fought with a sense of urgency following the knockdown, likely realizing how far down on the cards he had fallen.

Bracero managed to put Corley on the canvas in the eighth round, when Corley's glove appeared to touch the canvas after a combination, but it was too little, too late in the all-action affair.

GABRIEL ROSADO TKO 5 JESUS SOTO-KARASS

In the first installment of NBC Sports Net's *Fight Night* series, Gabriel Rosado (19-5, 11 KOs) out-slugged Jesus Soto-Karass (24-7-3, 16 KOs) to win his fifth consecutive fight before a sold-out crowd Jan. 21 at the Asylum Arena in Philadelphia.

The 26-year-old Philly fighter was in excellent shape and seemed to be too strong for his Mexican counterpart, who moved up to 154 for the bout. It was Soto-Karass' fourth straight defeat, including two losses to Mike Jones.

Rosado applied pressure from the onset and couldn't miss his target, landing uppercuts and right hands at will. In the third, Rosado busted open Soto-Karass' left eye. Soto-Karass seemed ready to go in the fourth but barely made it out of the round. Rosado finished him off in the fifth, as referee Steve Smoger stepped in to prevent further punishment at 2:06 of the round.

It was a nice showcase win for Rosado, who landed 58 percent of his power shots (59 of 102) in the bout.

DANIEL PONCE DE LEON KO 6 OMAR ESTRELLA

Daniel Ponce De Leon had a bad 2011, losing to both Adrien Broner and Yuriorkis Gamboa in HBO-televised fights.

In his first bout of 2012, Ponce De Leon, 31, returned to Ensenada, Mexico for a stay-busy featherweight bout, earning a sixth round KO victory over countryman Omar Estrella (15-4-2, 10 KOs) on Jan. 21.

Estrella, 24, dropped Ponce De Leon (42-4, 35 KOs) in the second round with a right hand, but it was a flash knockdown. Ponce De Leon, showing no ill effects, brought the fight to Estrella. He finished the bout in the sixth, dropping Estrella for the count of 10 with a flurry of punches. Time of the stoppage was 1:31.

MIGUEL VAZQUEZ UD 12 AMETH DIAZ

Miguel Vazquez (30-3, 13 KOs) successfully defended his IBF lightweight strap on Jan. 21 before his hometown fans in Guadalajara, Mexico, dropping mandatory challenger Ameth Diaz (30-11, 21 KOs) in the sixth round en route to a one-sided points victory.

Diaz, 28, stopped Leonardo Zappavigna over five rounds in August to earn the title shot, but Vazquez's cagey, high-volume style proved to be too much. Scores were 120-107, 120-107 and 119-108 for the 25-year-old southpaw.

Vazquez, rated No. 4 by THE RING, figures to get a big fight at 135 in the near future.

BRYANT JENNINGS UD 10 MAURICE BYARM

Main Events was left scurrying for a new main event after Eddie Chambers pulled out of his NBC Sports *Net Fight* Night bout with Sergei Liakhovich.

They found a good one when undefeated American heavyweight prospects Bryant Jennings and Maurice Byarm agreed to meet on Jan. 21 at the Asylum Arena in Philadelphia with just five days notice.

Jennings (12-0, 5 KOs) seized the opportunity and established himself as a heavyweight prospect worth watching with a unanimous-decision victory over the 29-year-old Byarm. The scores were 96-94, 96-94 and 97-93.

The Philadelphia natives put on a competitive bout, but it was Jennings whose class showed, as he landed the cleaner shots throughout. The southpaw Byarm (13-1-1, 9 KOs) had much success as well, but Jennings was the ring general. ■

Celestino Caballero easily outpointed **Satoshi Hosono**, further proof that he is back on track.

Image: **Fightwireimages**

HEAVYWEIGHTS

KUBRAT PULEV TKO 10 MICHAEL SPROTT
MIKE PEREZ W 10 FRIDAY AHUNANYA
DAVID PRICE KO 1 JOHN MCDERMOTT
FRANCESCO PIANETA W 8 ZACK PAGE

CRUISERWEIGHTS

IAGO KILADZE TKO 2 JOZSEF NAGY
NENAD BOROVCANIN TKO 8 LARS BUCHHOLZ
SHANE MCPHILBIN TKO 12 LEON WILLIAMS
JUHO HAAPOJA W 12 IAN TIMS

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

ROBIN KRASNIQI TKO 12 HAKIM ZOULIKHA
DENIS SIMCIC W 10 TOMAS ADAMEK
LUIS GARCIA W 8 ALEXANDER JOHNSON

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

ROBERT STIEGLITZ W 12 HENRY WEBER
ANDRE DIRRELL KO 2 DARRYL CUNNINGHAM
ARTHUR ABRAHAM KO 5 PABLO FARIAS
DYAH DAVIS W 10 ALFONSO LOPEZ
GIOVANNI DE CAROLIS KO 3 BLAS MIGUEL MARTINEZ

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

JERMAIN TAYLOR KO 8 JESSIE NICKLOW
TERESA PEROZZI W 10 LORISSA RIVAS
YVES STUDER W 12 ALIAKSANDR SUSHCHYTS

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

MICHAEL MEDINA W 10 GRADY BREWER
ADAM TRUPISH TKO 1 JANKS TROTTER
JAVIER FRANCISCO MACIEL TKO 1 ESTEBAN PONCE
DENIS DOUGLIN W 8 STEVE MARTINEZ

WELTERWEIGHTS

GABRIEL ROSADO TKO 5 JESUS SOTO KARASS
TEERACHAI KRATINGDAENGGYM TKO 2 DENNIS PADUA
ED PAREDES KO 3 MICHAEL LOZADA
SASHA YENGOYAN W 8 GEORGE UNGIADZE
PATRICK ALLOTEY W 12 PATRICE SOU TOKE
YORDENIS UGAS W 8 ESTEBAN ALMARAZ

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

DEMARCUS CORLEY W 10 GABRIEL BRACERO
MOTOKI SASAKI W 8 ROEL LAGUNA
RAMON AYALA W 10 CARLOS WINSTON VELASQUEZ
MIKE FARAGON TKO 3 ANDRES LEDESMA

LIGHTWEIGHTS

MIGUEL VAZQUEZ W 12 AMETH DIAZ
LUIS RAMOS JR W 10 RAYMUNDO BELTRAN
OMAR FIGUEROA TECH. WIN 6 MICHAEL PEREZ
DANNIE WILLIAMS TECH. WIN 6 FERNANDO TREJO
EMILIANO MARSILI TKO 7 DERRY MATHEWS
GUSTAVO BERMUDEZ TKO 6 ALBERTO SANTILLAN
JEAN PIERRE BAUWENS W 8 NUGZAR MARGVELASHVILI
TAKEHIRO SHIMADA W 8 KOSUKE IWASHITA
MASON MENARD W 8 RYNELL GRIFFIN

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

TAKASHI UCHIYAMA TKO 11 JORGE SOLIS
RAMONA KUEHNE TKO 8 RENATA DOMSODI
SEIICHI OKADA W 10 KOJI UMETSU
DONG-HYUK KIM TECH. WIN 8 RONALD PONTILLAS

Heavyweight prospect **David Price** was quite pleased after stopping **John McDermott** in one round. Image: **Getty Images**

FEATHERWEIGHTS

CELESTINO CABALLERO W 12 SATOSHI HOSONO
DANIEL PONCE DE LEON KO 6 OMAR ESTRELLA
SHOJI KIMURA W 10 RYOL LI LEE
ALEJANDRA MARINA OLIVERAS KO 5 JESSICA VILLAFRANCA

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX KO 6 RICO RAMOS
TEON KENNEDY MD 10 CHRISTOPHER MARTIN
SOD KOKIETGYM KO 6 ZHANDOS ZHETPISBAYEV
ALEJANDRO LOPEZ W 10 JOSE PALMA
HIDEO SAKAMOTO TECH. WIN 9 KAZUYOSHI NIKI
MARYLIN HERNANDEZ W 10 ANIYA SEKI

BANTAMWEIGHTS

NOBUO NASHIRO KO 2 NORASING PATANAKAN GYM
LEO SANTA CRUZ TECH. WIN 4 ALEJANDRO HERNANDEZ
FELIPE ORUCUTA TKO 5 ROBERTO CASTANEDA
AARON BOBADILLA TKO 5 RODOLFO HERNANDEZ
JOSE CARLOS VARGAS W 10 JONATHAN LECONA RAMOS
MONICO LAURENTE TECH. WIN 5 ADELINO BALONGCAS

Unbeaten heavyweight **Kubrat Pulev** (right) took out veteran **Michael Sprott** in 10 rounds even though he suffered a cut in his left eyebrow in the first round. Image: **Getty Images**

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— José Chegüi Torres

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

SHO ISHIDA KO 1 SIRICHAI MONTHON GYM
ALBERT PAGARA TKO 3 LOWIE BANTIGUE

FLYWEIGHTS

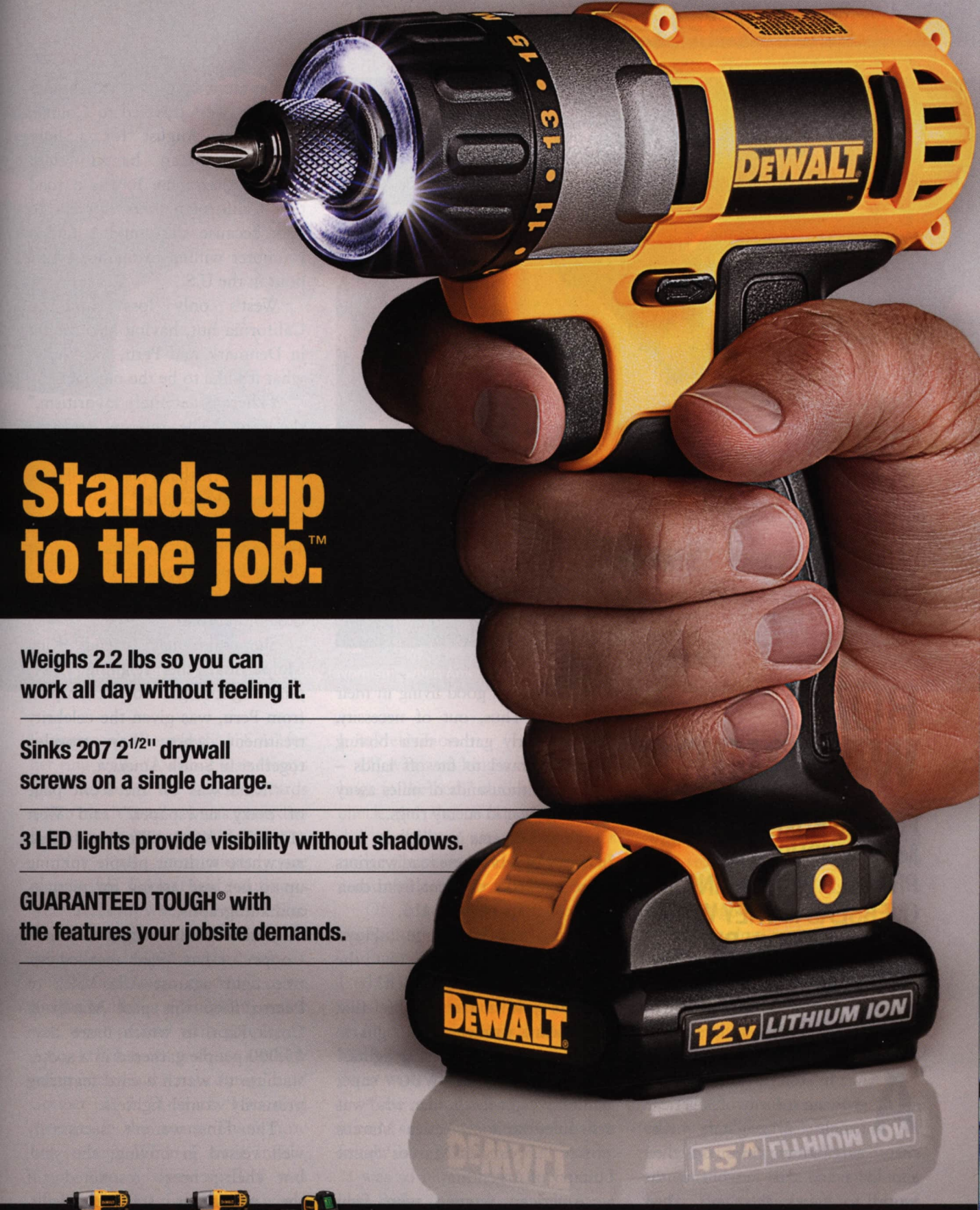
PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM D 12 HIROFUMI MUKAI
RYO MIYAZAKI TKO 3 KAENPETCH SITHPOOPETCH
EDGAR SOSA TKO 7 ROILO GOLEZ
IRMA SANCHEZ TKO 2 FAHPRATAN LOOKSAIKONGDIN
FROILAN SALUDAR KO 1 NELSON LLANOS
SONNY BOY JARO KO 3 ALLAN RANADA
WELBETH LOBERANIS W 10 JONATHAN RICABLANCA
NAWAPHON POR CHOKCHAI W 12 REY MIGRENO

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

KOMPAYAK PORPRAMOOK KO 10 ADRIAN HERNANDEZ
JESSICA CHAVEZ TKO 5 TEERAPORN PANNIMIT
ESMERALDA MORENO W 10 YESENIA MARTINEZ CASTREJON
VERGILIO SILVANO TKO 4 ALLAN DORONILLA
WISANU KOKIETGYM W 12 ROQUE LAURO
OSVALDO RAZON W 12 IVAN MENESES

STRAWWEIGHTS

KAZUTO IOKA TKO 1 YODGOEN TOR CHALERMCHAI
WANHENG MENAYOTHIN W 6 ALBERT ALCOY
FERNANDO OCON W 10 JULIUS ALCOS
RYUJI HARA TKO 2 LOUIS LOEMOLI



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Ana Julaton said traveling far and wide to get good fights is a way of life for American women. Image: **Craig Bennett-Fightwireimages**

ROAD WARRIORS

FEMALE BOXERS OFTEN MUST ENDURE THE PITFALLS OF FIGHTING OVERSEAS IF THEY WANT TO TAKE PART IN BIG FIGHTS

By **David A. Avila**

Ana Julaton is a part of a growing sorority of American female prizefighters who carry gargantuan chips on their shoulders and dare anyone in the world to knock them off. Their motto might be: Any time, any place.

Emphasis on "any place."

The unfortunate reality for female fighters is that few opportunities exist to make a good living in their homeland. Thus, out of necessity, they regularly gather their boxing gear and travel to far off lands – sometimes thousands of miles away – to wage war in enemy rings.

This is one area in which the lives of female boxers – these road warriors – are markedly different from their male counterparts in the U.S.

Can you imagine Floyd Mayweather jetting to the Philippines to defend his belt?

"It's just a fact of life that (American) women must fight in other countries to get big fights," said Julaton, the WBO super bantamweight titleholder, who was scheduled to face Yesica Marcos in late February in Marcos' home country of Argentina.

American women who fight overseas often must contend with partisan judges and referees, as well as crowds that are not shy about deriding foreign fighters.

Bantamweight titleholder Kaliesha West traveled to Colima, Mexico in August for a fight against Mexican bantamweight Jessica Villafranco. It was a road the Californian was forced to take because she couldn't find a promoter willing to finance a title bout in the U.S.

West's only loss came in California but, having also fought in Denmark and Peru, she knows what it's like to be the outsider.

"There is definitely favoritism," she said. "The referees and the judges will be biased against the road team … that's just the risk we women have to take."

Despite the downside, though, West and others also acknowledge the striking difference in the way women fighters are perceived in the U.S. and abroad.

She said her friend Kina Malpartida, the reigning WBA junior lightweight world champion from Peru, was given the celebrity treatment when they traveled together in South America.

"Kina was on the front page of every newspaper," said West (14-1-3, 4 KOs). "We couldn't go anywhere without people running up to her and asking for pictures and autographs."

Junior featherweight Melinda Cooper of Las Vegas recalled her title fight against Ada Velez of Puerto Rico this past March in Costa Rica, in which more than 15,000 people gathered in a soccer stadium to watch a card featuring primarily women fighters.

The fans weren't necessarily well versed in boxing, she said, but their cheers resonated off the monstrous stadium walls. Unbeaten Hanna Gabriel of Costa Rica was the headliner.

"That was awesome," said Cooper, who selected Bruce

Kaliesha West said "there is definitely favoritism" when American women fight abroad. Image: **Craig Bennett-Fightwireimages**

Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." for her ring walk. "I wish it was always like that. But in the States the cards are so much smaller. I was excited to fight in front of a crowd like that."

Not all excursions are pleasurable. Cooper said conditions were dreadful when she traveled to Mexico to fight in a broiling arena in the dead of summer in 2010.

"When I went to Mexico we fought in, like, a gymnasium and it was super packed with people, no A.C., 110 degrees with no air flow going in and out. I was dying," said Cooper (21-2, 11 KOs). "I warmed up outside the arena. That's how hot it was. When I went inside, I got, like, a dizzy spell. I was dehydrated. But that was the worst ever. Everyone who was in there was drenched in sweat."

After the fight, Cooper and her trainer watched movies on the hotel television.

"I was watching a movie about bugs in the bed," she said. "I never check the sheets but this time I did and there was a big spider under the sheets and I screamed. I couldn't sleep after that."

Of course, experiences vary depending on location.

Lightweight world champion Layla McCarter (34-13-5, 7 KOs) journeyed to Tokyo to fight undefeated Fujin Raika. McCarter had a positive experience and came away with a victory.

"The crowd was very polite in Japan," said McCarter, who also has fought in New Zealand and Canada. "I was so happy I won in Japan. I beat Raika. I beat her in her home town. It was a great experience. After the fight, the promoter and Raika drove us to the airport personally. That was pretty nice. Raika had a black eye and was beat up and there she was, taking me to the airport. Japan was a great experience."

Almost every American woman who has won a world title the past few years has fought in another country. From mini flyweights to heavyweights, they all keep their passports close at hand and don't hesitate to make long journeys.

Whether their traveling experiences are enjoyable or trying in the end, though, they know that they're at a disadvantage once they step into the ring.

"That's why I train with a chip on my shoulder," Julaton said. "Me being a female fighter, it's that double standard that I have to be 10 times better. That's the way it goes. Being a champion you really put yourself in a high position and you need to be dominating to keep your belt."

Any time, any place. ■

THE ROAD TO LONDON

THE RING WILL TAKE A LOOK AT THE OLYMPIC TEAM OF ONE NATION EACH ISSUE. THIS MONTH: CHINA

By: **Norm Frauenheim**

China, known mostly for ping-pong just four decades ago, is as new to boxing as it is to capitalism. The country didn't put on the gloves until 1986, 10 years after Sugar Ray Leonard set the Olympic gold standard at the 1976 Montreal Games. It had been outlawed by Chairman Mao, who apparently didn't like what he saw in Chairman Don King's business. In the post-Mao chase for money, however, Olympic medals are a commodity as valuable as iron ore. The Chinese are pursuing them in the pool, on the track and in the ring.

At the 2008 Beijing Games, the Chinese rolled a boxing team off the assembly line with results that say they are a developing contender, a potential force in London and an investment opportunity for pro possibilities in a nation with the world's biggest pay-per-view population.

They won two gold medals -- two more than Cuba, two more than the United States and the first two in Chinese history. Two more trips to the medal stand for one silver and a bronze gave the Chinese four, second overall to the Cubans, who won eight -- four silver and four bronze. Sure, maybe there was some hometown cooking, but boxing wouldn't be the same without that debate baked into its recipe.

Any prediction for what they might do in London is a hazardous undertaking, in large part because they will be in somebody else's hometown. For the first time, however, the Chinese will bring expectations and attract attention because of 2008 and what they've done since then. Creating a boxing tradition isn't exactly like building an auto industry. But an American promoter who grew up in a boxing family is confident this Chinese export will eventually be as successful as any other.

Zou Shiming, a gold medalist in 2008, might one day be remembered as China's father of boxing.

Image: **Getty Images**

Bantamweight Zhang Jiawei is new to the Chinese team but has demonstrated considerable promise. Image: Getty Images

"They were so excellent in Beijing," Dino Duva said. "In London, I don't know. There's a natural progression in this sport. Good fighters get older. New ones show up. We'll see. But in Beijing they showed that they're terrific athletes and excellent boxers. The potential is there."

Duva arrived in Beijing in 2008 as a spectator. He left impressed and with a business plan. After 16 or 17 more trips to China and enough frequent-flier miles for a free seat on NASA's next moon shot, Duva said he has an agreement with the nation's sports ministry and the Chinese Boxing Federation to market and train its best Olympians for pro careers. Basketball center Yao Ming's agreement in 2002 with the Houston Rockets is the template. In effect, China acted as Yao's agent in the deal that allowed him to play in the NBA.

"It's been great, terrific," Duva said of dealing with Chinese officials. "This is nothing like what the Cubans have done, who have had to defect."

Camps in the Poconos and Florida with Dino's dad, Hall of Fame trainer Lou Duva, and a U.S.-China dual match, Empires Collide, last Oct. 1 in New York are a good beginning to the working relationship, which Dino Duva says will continue when the best go pro after the London Games in August.

The very best is Zou Shiming, who one day might be remembered as the father of Chinese boxing. He campaigns at the Olympics' lightest weight, junior fly, yet has had a heavyweight impact on the genesis of Chinese boxing. He won its first boxing gold in 2008. He won its first boxing medal ever, a bronze at the 2004 Games in Athens, where in the opening rounds he upset American Rau'shee Warren, who will be going to his third Olympics in London.

Unknown in 2004, Zou stunned Warren, a gold medal favorite. Between rounds, Warren went to his corner and told his coach: "Dang, he can move, and I can't catch him."

For the most part, Zou's speed carried him to gold in 2008 and a 2011 world championship in September in Baku, Azerbaijan. Pro power is hard to judge at the Olympic level, especially since the advent of computer scoring that accounts more for the number of punches than the impact of one. But versatility is a Zou trademark that Duva believes will make him a great pro at a weight once defined by 1988 American silver medalist Michael Carbajal, Humberto "Chiquita" Gonzalez and Ricardo Lopez.

"I think he would do terrifically as a pro," Duva said. "He knows how to move, how to adjust. He can box, he can counter. When power is necessary, he can do that, do it when he wants to."

In London, Zou will be 31, which is old in the lightest weight classes. But it also means the Chinese have had a chance to grow familiar with him. Most of what they know about boxing has come from watching Zou, who wins and also understands the value of some Western-like showmanship. He wore gold shoes in fighting his way to the medal stand's top pedestal in 2008 at Workers Gymnasium in downtown Beijing. Before the opening bell, he blew kisses to capacity crowds that were there for each of his bouts.

His versatility within the ropes is matched by a variety of heroes, East and West. As a kid, he watched television shows about mythic swordsmen well-versed in Asian martial arts. Then, he saw film of Muhammad Ali. Both, he says, are part of his ring style.

"Putting them together is a specialty of Chinese boxing," Zou told Chinese reporters.

It's also a way of introducing some of his best Olympic teammates.

KEEP AN EYE ON

Super heavyweight **Zang Zhilei**. The Klitschko-like behemoth – 6-foot-7, 260 pounds -- won China's silver medal in 2008. Lou Duva has called the big southpaw one of the best heavyweight prospects in the world. But the world includes emerging threats at super heavyweight from Russia and Eastern Europe. Zang won the U.S. dual in October, but he had to battle for every point in a tough victory over American Danny Kelly.

Light heavyweight **Meng Fanlong**. He finished second at the World Championships in September. But Dino Duva believes he will be a factor in London and as a pro. "A hell of a young fighter," Duva said.

Bantamweight **Zhang Jiawei**. He's new to China's Olympic team. But he has arrived with some eye-opening work, including a second-round stoppage in October of American Ricky Rodriguez, a runner-up in the U.S. National Championships. ■

CHINA IN OLYMPICS

HOW CHINA FARED IN BOXING AT THE 2008 GAMES IN BEIJING:

GOLD	2
SILVER	1
BRONZE	1
TOTAL:	4

MOST MEDALS BY COUNTRY

CUBA	8
CHINA	4
FRANCE, GREAT BRITAIN, IRELAND, ITALY AND RUSSIA	3

American promoter **Dino Duva** believes Meng Fanlong will succeed in the 2012 Olympics and as a pro.
Image: **Getty Images**

THE NEXT BIG THING?

By **Don Stradley**

Tyson Fury is coming to America. All 6 foot, 9 inches of him. All 260 pounds of him.

That's the plan, anyway.

Fury's manager, Mick Hennessy, wanted to bring the British Empire heavyweight titleholder to these shores for a St Patrick's Day fight in New York. Fury's huge size and outspoken nature have already made him a bit of ratings magnet on U.K. television, so the next logical step is to bring him stateside. But with Hennessy's preferred date and location booked for a middleweight championship bout between Sergio Martinez and Matthew Macklin, we'll have to wait until later in the year to get a look at the mammoth from Manchester.

"Because of the situation Tyson and his family went through prior to Christmas – his infant son was seriously ill – boxing was put to the side," Hennessy told THE RING. "Thankfully, Tyson's son is doing very well and things are being sorted out."

The England-born Fury makes the most of a well-publicized Irish Traveller background. The Traveller lifestyle is Gypsy in nature, complete with caravans and, shall we say, living outside the system. For his proposed 2012 American invasion, though, Fury will be full-tilt Irish, with Hennessy focusing on strong Irish-American markets such as New York and Boston.

"He has all of the ingredients to be a star anywhere in the world," Hennessy said, citing Fury's aggression as the reason he will surpass other oversized heavyweights of recent years. "It doesn't matter who he fights – mover, counter-puncher, etc. – Tyson will find his range, put it on them and force his opponent into an exciting fight."

Fury was dropped on his ass during the second round of a bout last November with Neven Pajkic. He managed to stop Pajkic in the next round, but seeing Fury fall was a reminder of why fighters of Jurassic

The handlers of **Tyson Fury** (right) believe he has what it takes to make it big in the United States.

Image: **Getty Images**

Tyson Fury apparently gets bored in the ring at times but he certainly looks focused here.

Image: **Getty Images**

"I SAW TYSON SPAR HELENIUS AND, WELL, LET'S JUST SAY IF THAT FIGHT EVER HAPPENS, TYSON WILL TAKE HIM APART."

dimensions usually fail. Their chins are vulnerable because they tend to lean into opponents, and their over-long legs are a detriment in a sport where balance is everything.

Still, there are plenty of behemoths in boxing these days. Robert Helenius stands 6-6 and is known as the "Nordic Nightmare," while England's David Price is 6-8. America has a big man, too – 6-7 Deontay Wilder. Since Fury, Helenius, Price and Wilder will be entering their primes at approximately the same time, they may all get a chance to beat the bricks out of each other.

"I haven't seen Wilder yet but I have seen Helenius and Price," Hennessey said. "I saw Tyson spar Helenius and, well, let's just say if that fight ever happens, Tyson will take him apart." As for Price, he "isn't out of the blocks. He's had a slow career; he's older (28) and hasn't fought anybody."

Fury (17-0, 12 knockouts) occasionally loses focus in the ring, but Hennessy says that's because Fury can handle opponents with such ease and gets bored.

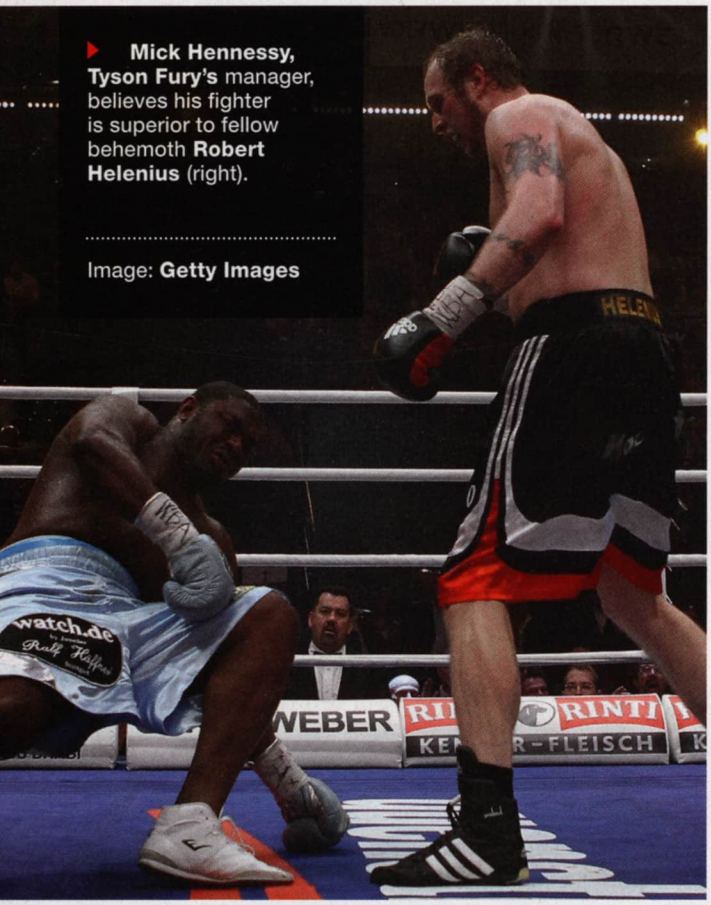
"I believe that Tyson is so talented that he needs a real, dangerous threat in front of him to bring out the best in him. He has to be motivated," Hennessy said.

Fury is not some reluctant warrior drafted into the sport because of his size. His dad, "Gypsy John" Fury, and his uncles Hugh and Peter, did some boxing a quarter century ago, taking part in the Irish Traveller pastime of bare-knuckle fighting. The Fury clan even claims a link to Bartley Gorman, the shadowy "King of the Gypsies," who was billed as Ireland's bare-knuckle champion during the 1970s and '80s. Although they weren't much good when they tried gloved fighting, the original Fury brothers enjoyed reputations as hard men. Fury's father is currently serving an 11-year prison sentence for putting a rival's eye out in a horrific street altercation.

Fury referred to his own dark nature in a recent interview with Britain's Guardian newspaper.

"I think I need a psychiatrist because I do believe I am mentally disturbed in some way," Fury said.

Whether Fury has legit head problems, was



Mick Hennessy, Tyson Fury's manager, believes his fighter is superior to fellow behemoth **Robert Helenius** (right).

Image: **Getty Images**

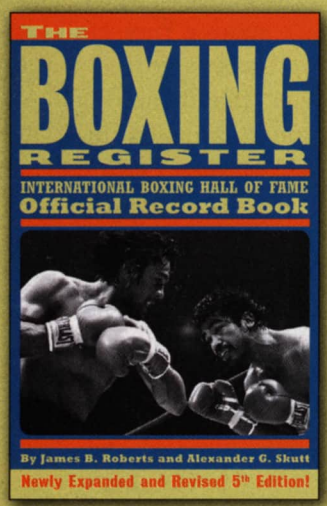
marketing himself as a psycho or simply trying to forge a bond with his hot-tempered dad, the statement achieved what was probably the desired effect: publicity. The Brit papers ran with it.

He also put on a good show against Pajkic. After he was decked, Fury soon had Pajkic stumbling and falling like a steer stunned at the slaughterhouse. Referee Phil Edwards stopped the mess at 2:44 of the third. Pajkic (rhymes with "paycheck") protested, but whatever he said was drowned out by the crowd noise at Manchester's Event City, a venue known mostly for classic car shows and mobile home displays.

Fury's real talent may be for playing to the gallery. He clowns a bit, and dares opponents to hit him, like the town brawler charming the rabble at the local fairgrounds. Prior to the bout, he described the damage he planned for Pajkic.

"When I go in there I'm trying to put my fist through the back of his head," Fury said. "I'm trying to break his ribs and make them stick out the other side."

Fury can stir people. ■



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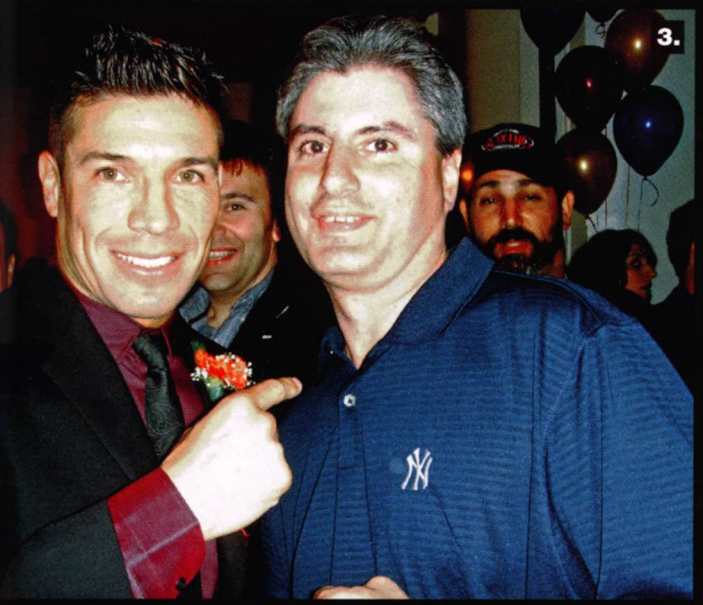
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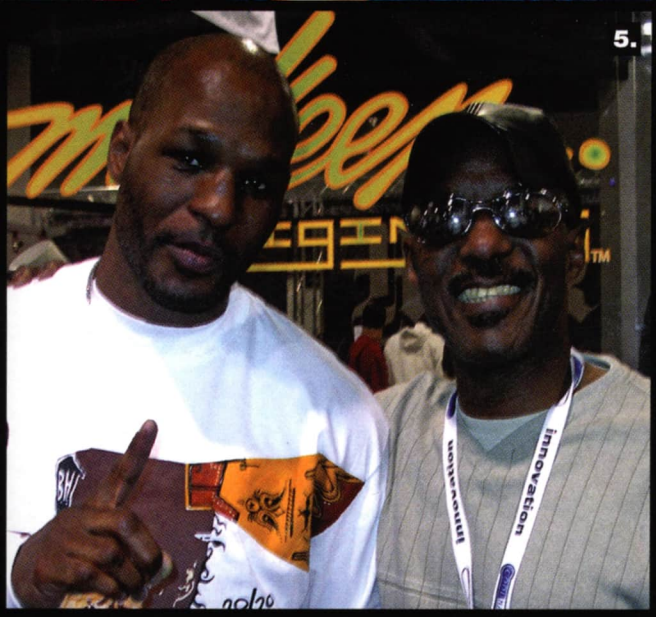
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1. Emmanuel Pelagio with Brian Viloria after Viloria beat Giovani Segura on Nov. 12 in Manila **2.** Dennis Rodriguez with Antonio Margarito before Cotto fight New York City. **3.** Tom Grandinetti with Sergio Martinez at the 2011 Hall of Fame weekend in Canastota, N.Y. **4.** Ryan Norrington with Victor Ortiz at the Andre Ward vs. Carl Froch fight Dec. 17 at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, N.J. **5.** Gip Nobel with Bernard Hopkins in Las Vegas.

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